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SERVICE LEARNING, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, AND THE TOURISM SECTOR IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED BAMYAN, AFGHANISTAN

By

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Dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Systems Ecology

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Abstract

Widespread consensus among the tourism and development studies literature suggests that higher education plays a key role in the achievement of sustainable tourism development. However, discussions on approaches to teaching sustainability in tourism at the higher education level are underdeveloped, especially in conflict-affected contexts. To address this gap, this study combines an examination of tourism stakeholders’ perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development for a small tourism sector in Bamyan, Afghanistan, with an innovative approach to teaching sustainability in a tourism higher education program. Using mixed qualitative methods, this dissertation first examines tourism stakeholders’ perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development, where I identified the importance of hospitality, gender empowerment, cultural heritage, and nature in tourism planning and education. Secondly, I document findings from a 2-year-long case study of a service learning (SL) course designed to teach sustainability and values-based competencies for tourism students at Bamyan University. This dissertation is conceptually informed by the theoretical literature on inclusive tourism, sustainability education, values of respect, and conflict-affected contexts.

Chapter 2 assessed tourism stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of sustainable tourism development to provide recommendations for tourism implementation strategies and teaching sustainability in tourism higher education programs. Chapter 3 discussed the key design elements of the SL curriculum for tourism students at Bamyan University. Chapter 4 evaluated the impacts of SL on teaching tourism students sustainability competencies. Our results showed how the SL experience led students to self-discovery and strong conceptualizations of sustainability and built students’ social relationships with community stakeholders. Chapter 5 expands on the impacts of the SL course discussed in Chapter 4 to assess how the instructional approach of the SL course contributes to students’ values-based learning outcomes and building students’ relationships within the community. Results showed how the teachers and students shaped the course and defined their own values-based learning outcomes founded on themes of respect for autonomy, equality, and culture. In sum, this dissertation provides valuable information for developing effective tourism education programs, relationships of respect between teachers, students, and community stakeholders, and the empowerment of students to contribute to local solutions which serve a role in stabilization efforts in conflict-affected contexts.
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Notes on authorship
* In this dissertation, I use the pronoun “we” in recognition and appreciation of the contributions of my collaborators and coauthors.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The higher education sector plays a critical role in rebuilding conflict-affected Afghanistan (Burridge et al, 2016; Hayward, 2015). Before the Soviet invasion in 1979, Afghanistan was a regional leader in higher education with most faculty engaged in research and community service (Babury & Hayward, 2013). The two decades of international conflict and civil war between 1979 and 2001 compromised connections between the higher education sector and communities; most campuses were closed or damaged, and those that did remain open were reduced to teaching militant ideologies during the five years of the Taliban rule (1996-2001).

The international military occupation and establishment of a new democratic government in 2001 opened the doors for the rebuilding of the higher education system. At that time, fewer than 10,000 students (>1% of the college-age population) were enrolled in higher education and many of the best faculty members had fled the country (Hayward, 2015). Despite these challenges, and also recognizing the valuable contribution that regional higher education institutions play in local, regional, and national development, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) began rebuilding and expanding a network of regional universities in all but two of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces (MoHE, 2016).

One role that regional institutes of higher education can play in development processes in conflict-affected contexts is through research, teaching, and service in the tourism sector. Many studies have demonstrated how tourism is one means of supporting sustainable development and peacebuilding efforts in war-torn societies (Alluri, 2009; Buultjens et al., 2016; Guasca et al., 2021; Causevica & Lynch, 2013; Novelli et al., 2012). For example, tourism can serve as a tool for economic recovery, reconciliation between opposing groups, and support for local
communities’ expressions against marginalization and dispossession (Guasca et al., 2021). By focusing on tourism’s role in addressing some of the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, socio-economic inequalities, and ethnic and religious tensions, higher education can contribute towards building inclusive and sustainable development.

As higher education plays its part in the effort to reduce the root causes of conflict, a more inclusive model of tourism should be adopted by tourism education programs so that the outputs help to build sustainable and peaceful societies. In the last few years, the concept of inclusive tourism has gained international attention as a form of sustainable tourism that aims to address the inequalities in tourism planning and approaches (Peterson et al., 2020). To better understand how inclusive tourism relates to sustainable tourism development, I borrow definitions from Liu (2003) to define sustainable development (or sustainable tourism development) and sustainable tourism:

‘Sustainable development’ is more process-oriented and associated with managed changes that bring about improvement in conditions for those involved in such development. Similarly, sustainable tourism is conveniently defined as all types of tourism (conventional or alternative forms) that are compatible with or contribute to sustainable development. (pp. 460-461)

Inclusive tourism, which includes new people and places in tourism consumption and aims to achieve more equitable forms of sustainable development for marginalized groups (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018), can therefore be considered one type of Liu’s sustainable tourism. Including new places, like Afghanistan, on the tourism destination map is one approach to social integration and for empowering marginalized groups to benefit as tourism producers and consumers (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

For tourism higher education to support inclusive and sustainable tourism development, tourism educators need to develop future tourism leaders with sustainability and values-based
competencies (Cotterell et al., 2019). Teaching values-based competencies, such as cultural humility and respect, is important in conflict-affected societies for restoring inequalities between culturally perceived groups (Sahar & Kaunert, 2021). Furthermore, research has shown that sustainability and values-based education can help foster social action, creative problem solving, improved public support for higher education, and make education relevant to place (Cuban & Anderson, 2007; Frisk & Larson, 2011; Jamal et al. 2011). In developing regions, western education models are often imported without examining the needs of the local tourism sector and prevailing socio-cultural, economic, and political conditions (Lewis, 2004). Thus, the various conceptualizations of sustainable tourism development among tourism stakeholders and pedagogical approaches towards teaching sustainability need to be localized to be reflective and sensitive to the socio-cultural context and values of the sector served.

This dissertation explores tourism stakeholders’ perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development and a new approach towards teaching sustainability and values-based outcomes in tourism higher education in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan. Bamyan Province is located in central Afghanistan’s Hazarajat region in the Hindu Kush Mountains along the historic Silk Road (a traditional east and west trade route). Its history, natural beauty, and peaceful society have inspired local residents to promote Bamyan as a unique place for tourism development. The faculty at Bamyan University (BU), recognizing that tourism can contribute to sustainable development and peacebuilding through collaborative efforts within the tourism sector, established the first Department of Tourism in the country in 2010. The BU Department of Tourism faculty are open to innovative programs, new experiments, and developing curriculum that follows current trends such as experiential learning with applied local relevance. However, the faculty stresses that building students’ capacity to manage complexity and
diversity to collaboratively solve problems and identify opportunities in the tourism sector
requires implementation featuring well-planned action, testing, and reform in the higher
education sector.

One need for reforming the higher education sector in Bamyan is to bring curricula into
alignment with both international expectations and the needs of the region and country. This
need for reform pertains to the tourism curricula as well as other programs across Afghanistan’s
higher education system. Although BU and the MoHE are committed to updating curricula,
many faculties at BU are still using a highly formal instructional practice that has been shown to
have low long-term retention effectiveness (Handelsman et al., 2007). This instructional
approach covers large amounts of content-laden material through lectures and assesses students’
retention through standardized exams. Formal learning also does not contribute towards building
students’ sustainability and values-based competencies (Frisk & Larson, 2011). Furthermore, it
does not educate a new generation of Afghans who Spink (2005) emphasized need to learn “a
sense of social responsibility and national pride, incorporating ideas of unity in [cultural]
diversity and not an intolerance of perceived ‘difference’” (p.195).

Service learning (SL) is one pedagogical approach that is placed-based and involves
students in the process of collaboratively designing and implementing service experiences with
community members that meet real-life needs. SL is different from other forms of experiential
learning in that it aims to benefit both the students and the community (Furco, 1996). Research
has shown how SL integrated into higher education programs can contribute to building students
sustainability and values-based competencies (Molderez & Fonseca, 2018). For example, Jamal
et al. (2011) demonstrated how SL could contribute to building students’ strategic planning,
collaboration, ethics, and stewardship literacies through exploring sustainability issues related to
the well-being of diverse marginalized populations. Other advantages of SL include building students’ intercultural communication skills and shaping their sense of self-identity from the experiences and reflections they gain from entering a culture different from their own (Luter & Kronick, 2018; Merrill, 1999; Trigos-Carrillo et al., 2020). SL pedagogy also promotes students’ autonomy and leadership to act in the community, which builds their sense of social responsibility (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kahne et al., 2000; Morgan & Streb, 2001). SL, in terms of community impacts, can foster “social cohesion between different ethnic and cultural groups” by not only promoting respect for identity, but also for shared goals (Birdwell et al., 2013, p. 185). However, little research has focused on the impacts of SL in conflict-affected contexts (see, e.g., Dull, 2009; Trigos-Carrillo et al., 2020). In this regard, tourism researchers and educators must consider both the pedagogical approach and learning outcomes, as well as the community-driven priorities for sustainable tourism development to create meaningful programs.

**Scientific goal, aims, and research questions**

The goal of this dissertation is to produce a theoretically and practically informed grounded analysis of effective practices for teaching sustainability and values-based outcomes in tourism higher education in Bamyan, Afghanistan. To address this goal, my first aim is to define inclusive and sustainable tourism development according to local tourism stakeholders’ perceptions for informing a localized design for tourism higher education in Bamyan. My second aim is to assess how an experimental SL course could help to guide transformations in higher education curricula, especially in a tourism education program, and in students’ contributions to addressing community needs. The research uses mixed qualitative methods to explore the following research questions:
1. What are tourism stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development?

2. What are the key design elements of a SL course that is aimed at enabling students to contribute to inclusive and sustainable tourism development?

3. What are students’ perceptions of their sustainability competencies learned during the SL course?

4. How does the instructional approach of the SL course contribute to students’ values-based learning outcomes?

5. What are the conceptualizations of respect as perceived by teacher and student participants in the SL course?

6. What are the ways in which SL could build relationships within the community on the basis of societal values of respect?

**Identifying goal, aims, and research questions**

The above goal, aims, and research questions have evolved throughout my research process. The dynamic nature is attributed to my active role as a research participant during my fieldwork and the grounded theory approach used to analyze the data. During my fieldwork, I became involved with the Department of Tourism at BU through a consultancy position to help develop their curriculum in 2014. I designed and initiated the SL course in response to preliminary research that indicated that community representatives in the tourism sector had strong views about the need to connect the curriculum to tourism sector needs. Thus, because of my prior involvement with the Department of Tourism, I had a personal interest in the success of the SL course. As an active observer (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006), I provided guidance to the teachers and students when requested and otherwise withdrew, stood back, and observed. My
active role provided me with deeper insights into the tourism and higher education culture as I
developed trusting relationships with my research participants. Thus, the development of my
research aims and research questions were informed by continuous interactions and discussions
with my research participants and field assistants.

With regard to using a grounded theory approach to analyze the data, it was only after I
completed my fieldwork that new themes emerged on the impacts of the SL course on teachers,
students, and the community outcomes. A more extensive review of the literature on inclusivity,
sustainability, values-based outcomes of respect, and conflict-affected contexts made it clear
where there were major gaps in the literature and how this dissertation could contribute towards
transformations in higher education curricula in Afghanistan and in fragile countries elsewhere.

**Conceptual framework**

In the special issue of *Tourism Geographies*, Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) define and
provide a framework for inclusive tourism. They define inclusive tourism as “transformative
tourism in which marginalized groups are engaged in ethical production or consumption of
tourism and the sharing of its benefits” and indicate that marginalized groups can include “the
very poor, ethnic minorities, women and girls, differently abled people and other groups who
lack power and/or voice” (p. 592). In conflict-affected contexts, like Afghanistan, unequal power
relations at geographic scales have resulted in international and national policy agendas
excluding local voices and leading to political marginalization of local communities (Novelli et
al., 2015). Moreover, deep socio-cultural, political, and economic inequalities between ethnic,
religious, and gender groups in Afghanistan are conceived to be important drivers of conflict
(Novelli et al., 2015). Inclusive tourism is one way to contribute to the stabilization and
peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan by addressing these inequalities through “challenging
stereotypes or generalized histories and opening people up to understanding the situation of minorities” (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018, p. 592).

Scheyvens and Biddulph’s (2018) framework of inclusive tourism consists of seven elements for assessing aspirations or achievements in inclusive tourism for marginalized groups (Figure 1.1). These elements are elaborated on in their description of the following six components of the framework (note that each of the elements represents one of the following components except for two of which are synthesized in the first component): 1) overcoming barriers to disadvantaged groups to access tourism as producers or consumers; 2) facilitating self-representations by those who are marginalized or oppressed, so their stories can be told and their culture represented in ways that are meaningful to them; 3) challenging dominant power relations; 4) widening the range of people who contribute to decision-making about development of tourism; 5) providing opportunities for new places to be on the tourism map; and 6) encouraging learning, exchange and mutually beneficial relationships which promote understanding and respect between ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’.
This dissertation can be divided into two parts, both of which are aligned with this framework. The first part assesses tourism stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development in Bamyan Province. In this part, the conceptual framework provides a lens for understanding how local tourism stakeholders envision a sustainable path to tourism development that represents their cultural values. The framework also sheds light on the role of tourism in empowering the tourism stakeholders to respond and move forward from a very long history of injustice and conflict. The majority of the tourism stakeholders in Bamyan comprises of ethnic Hazaras who have experienced a long history of
marginalization from the Afghan state. In addition, component four of the framework was central to the methodology for assessing tourism stakeholders’ perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development. Component four indicates the need to widen the range of people in decision-making about tourism development (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). My study represented a wide range of local stakeholders working in the tourism sector including hotels/restaurants, handicrafts, development aid, government departments, academia, and other small businesses in Bamyan as a first step to engage in discussions about community-driven priorities.

The second part of the dissertation focuses on a case study of a SL course designed to teach tourism students at BU sustainability and values-based competencies important for inclusive and sustainable tourism development. The inclusive tourism framework aligns with the design and outcomes of the SL learning course. For example, in line with component four of the framework the SL course was designed to engage students in working with diverse stakeholders in their community for finding common goals to address sustainability issues. Component six of the framework, promoting mutual understanding and respect, was a major theme in the teacher, student, and community interactions during the SL course. The framework provided guidance for understanding students’ perception of the specific skills and attitudes they gained during the course in relation to the sustainability and values-based learning outcomes.

**Personal reflections and methodological implications**

As a female western researcher conducting research in Afghanistan, it is relevant to reflect on how my position, personal experiences, relationships, and methods may have influenced the research. My research position could be described as an ‘external insider’ as defined by Liamputtong (2010). I was socialized within another culture but acquired some of the
same values, behavior, and knowledge of the culture in which I was carrying out the research. While my data methods described in Chapters 2, 4, and 5 included interviews, focus groups, reflective essays, and ethnographic classroom observations, I would argue that the 32 months that I ‘lived on the ground’ provided me with a more holistic understanding of the social and educational contexts of Bamyan. The ‘living on the ground’ method, developed by de Ishtar (2004), is a cross-cultural research methodology based on the philosophy of participatory action research (PAR) and feminist phenomenology. Here, I will briefly touch on how this theoretical foundation was important to the positioning of my research in Bamyan.

PAR is a “reflective process. . . directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local context and embedded in social relationships” (Baum et al., 2006, p. 854). I learned about the history, cultures, political conflicts, livelihoods, food, family, and peoples’ struggles, passions, and hopes for the future through the dialogue I had with government leaders in Kabul and Bamyan; treks I made with local guides and community leaders through the Bamyan mountains; shared meals filled with long conversations I had with Afghan friends, colleagues, and students. Through these experiences, I developed strong relationships with my research participants. I was passionately present, which as de Ishtar (2004) explains is one approach for bridging the gap between the researcher and the host.

It is also important to note that my research opportunity with the tourism sector and BU emerged from my prior experience working as an international consultant in Bamyan Province. During my first trip to Afghanistan in 2014, I was hired by Bamyan Tourism Association, supported by the Aga Khan Foundation, to help develop the curriculum for the Department of Tourism at BU. I participated in tourism stakeholder planning meetings, facilitated the development the curriculum framework for the Department of Tourism at BU, and designed then
piloted the SL course. I also spent the next four years working as an education and field consultant for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Afghanistan. My research developed in response to the expressed needs I had encountered while working on the ground with the higher education sector and tourism stakeholders. Because I had broader engagement with the tourism sector and an understanding of the local context, I had a personal interest in the success of the tourism industry and SL course, which definitely influenced my decision to conduct this research and likely influenced my analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

My involvement in these activities challenged me in my role as a researcher, as they required collaborative engagement with all participants. As is common when using PAR, I acknowledge that local people, together with me, the researcher, must work towards finding solutions to their problems. While I become familiar with the issues facing the community over time, they remain the experts of their own lives, their communities, and what solutions might be helpful (Liamputtong, 2010). Thus, the ‘living on the ground’ method was central to my ability to facilitate the process by which the teachers and students could explore and adapt the SL course according to their norms and requirements. As an ‘active observer,’ I had to learn when to provide guidance to the teachers, students, and tourism stakeholders as well as when to withdraw, stand back, and observe.

Already having ‘a sense of place’ and strong connection to some of the Bamyan people, I was able to see how feminist phenomenology textured my research position. Feminist phenomenology seeks to clarify how gender influences one’s lived experiences and understanding of the world. de Ishtar (2004) described how white feminists working in indigenous cultures must be culturally aware and learn how to do research which is culturally unobtrusive. Learning the social and gender norms of Afghan society was critical to gaining my
research participants’ trust. I learned how to dress, communicate respectfully, and appropriate times to act as an outsider (e.g. playing volleyball with a group of male Afghan friends). My relationships with my research participants and community members in Bamyan grew beyond seeing myself as a female white researcher or an international consultant. Based on my findings in Chapter 2 regarding the tourism stakeholders’ hospitality and inclusive nature, it is not surprising that I felt welcomed as an ‘external insider’ and connected to the place.

My gender-sensitive intentions and position as an ‘external insider’ also supported my access to perspectives of female stakeholders in the tourism sector and female students’ experiences inside and outside of the university classroom. Gender sensitive data collection methods (in-depth interviews, focus groups, and ethnography) allowed me to interact with women and hear their voices. Except for a few rare occasions, I conducted interviews and focus groups with women without their male family members present. Generally, male family members were comfortable letting me talk alone with their female family members. The women were also very open and, in many cases, excited to share their stories with me. I attributed this to my position as a female researcher, but also to how many of my research participants and their families valued education and were interested in contributing to my research.

Finally, while writing this dissertation my aim was to have a critical and cautious view regarding the impacts of my own physical presence and the methods I used on my interpretation of the data and voices of my research participants. I believe being an ‘external insider’ had certain advantages such as prompting me to ask questions that required more detailed explanations, but it also had disadvantages, such as my potential biases towards the cultural and social norms, inherent in it. I acknowledge my limitations as an ‘external insider’ in this study. I
hope that my interpretations and decisions to include specific moments and quotations from the data accurately represent the voices and cultures of my research participants.

**Organization of the dissertation**

This dissertation is partitioned into two parts. The first part assesses tourism stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development in Bamyan Province. The second part presents the design of a SL course for tourism students at BU that is conceptually informed by local tourism stakeholders’ values and priorities for inclusive and sustainable tourism development. Then I assess the outcomes of the SL course on building tourism students’ sustainability and values-based competencies important for inclusive and sustainable tourism development. These two parts comprise of the following four chapters and a concluding chapter.

Chapter 2 is a qualitative study focusing on tourism stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development in Bamyan Province. The framework of inclusive tourism and stakeholder theory was applied to identify divergent and common interests and values among tourism stakeholders. In-depth interviews were conducted with 37 tourism stakeholders working in various sectors of the tourism industry including hotels/restaurants, handicrafts, development aid, government departments, academia, and other small businesses. The findings provide interesting insights for how hospitality, gender empowerment, cultural heritage, and nature were embraced as important sustainable development processes for inclusive tourism. The chapter provides useful insights for developing tourism strategies and policies as well as tourism curricula that is conceptually informed by the needs and priorities of society.
Chapters 3, 4, and 5 describe the design of the SL course and the empirical findings of the learning outcomes of the course. Chapter 3 presents the key design elements of the SL course curriculum that was co-designed through a 3-year collaborative partnership between BU, the University of Montana (UM), and UNEP. The course was designed as an interdisciplinary model to build tourism students’ key sustainability competencies in inclusive and sustainable tourism development. The chapter describes the course’s teaching philosophies, model, goals, learning objectives, activities, and assessment. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for educators who wish to integrate SL into higher education programs in Afghanistan.

Chapter 4 uses a case study approach to assess the impacts of a SL course on teaching tourism students sustainability competencies. Specifically, I explore the two-year implementation (2016-2017) of the SL course for students in the Department of Tourism at BU. The five key sustainability competencies evaluated in the course included: collaboration, values thinking, action-oriented, systems thinking, and the meta-competency, integrated problem-solving. Students’ perceptions of their sustainability competencies gained were assessed through reflective essays and focus group discussions. Results demonstrate that the course not only imparted sustainability competencies on students but also led to other significant learning outcomes. These outcomes included 1) students’ learning experiences led to self-discovery; 2) students experienced transformational learning through development of their sustainability competencies; 3) students built social relationships with the tourism sector and community stakeholders; and 4) students gained strong conceptualizations of sustainability to address community stakeholders’ social needs. The chapter concludes by highlighting teaching and design components that were pivotal for achieving the learning outcomes for tourism educators considering adopting a SL course.
Chapter 5 expands on the assessment of the SL course by using a qualitative mixed methods approach to explore the teachers’ instructional approach and students’ experiences that led towards students gaining values-based outcomes. Ethnographic notes, classroom video recordings, focus groups, and reflective essays were used to capture observations of the teacher and student interactions and the students’ perceptions of their values-based outcomes gained. The results were presented through three moments that occurred during the SL course to demonstrate the multiple values of respect that emerged from the classroom and community interactions. The values of respect were respect-as-autonomy, respect-as-equality, and respect for culture. Findings revealed that students gained communication, interpersonal, teamwork, and citizenship skills tied to the three themes of respect. The findings also demonstrate the potential that SL can have in building and restoring trusting relationships between higher education and communities centered around cultural values of respect in conflict affected Afghanistan. Furthermore, the findings respond the call to understand how educators in Afghanistan can integrate values-based competencies into curricula, to help support stabilization and peacebuilding efforts through teaching values that mitigate social distrust and tensions.

Chapter 6, the final chapter, summarizes the results of the prior chapters (2-5) and discusses the contributions of the research to the wider theoretical literature relative to the research questions. I then move on to highlight potential directions for future research and study.
References


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CHAPTER 2

Tourism Stakeholders’ Perceptions of Inclusive and Sustainable Tourism Development in Bamyan, Afghanistan

Abstract

In recent years, a tourism sector has emerged in Bamyan, Afghanistan, especially for adventure tourism, ecotourism, and cultural heritage tourism given the draw of its mountainous and cultural landscapes. Even in spite of persistent insecurity and conflict, the Bamyan residents have sought to capitalize on potential tourism growth. This article explores the factors and processes contributing to the emergence of a relatively small, yet niche tourism sector. Our case study utilizes stakeholder theory, operationalizing the concepts of place, inclusive tourism, and sustainable development in the context of local concerns in the tourism industry. Our analysis of field data highlights certain hospitality, gender empowerment, cultural heritage, and nature-based impacts of tourism. The objective here is to convey an empirically rich perspective and insights into the meaning of inclusive and sustainable tourism development and community-driven priorities of the tourism sector as one of the lead development initiatives for Bamyan Province. This analysis contributes to ongoing scholarly and policy debates around the advent of tourism as a tool for helping rebuild conflict-affected areas. The findings also advance knowledge on the ways sustainability should be contextualized and integrated into higher education tourism programs in conflict-affected contexts according to tourism stakeholders’ needs and aspirations for tourism development.
Introduction

Tourism is seen as an agent for positive change in conflict-affected contexts. In these contexts, tourism can play a role in contributing to peacebuilding efforts, diversifying the local economy, enhancing intercultural relations and inclusivity, and rebuilding the social fabric in divided societies (Alluri, 2009; Guasca et al., 2021; Kelly, 2006). For example, Alluri et al. (2014) demonstrated how despite the negative consequences of wars in Croatia, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka, tourism stakeholders succeeded in rebuilding the tourism industry, resulting in job creation and income opportunities important for the reconstruction process. Similarly, other studies assessing post-conflict recovery of tourism in Sri Lanka (Buultjens et al., 2016), Albania (Holland, 2000), and Cambodia (Winter, 2008) observed how tourism is a potentially important tool for countries to integrate into the global economy. Guasca et al. (2021) argued that despite tourism scholarship in war-torn areas focusing on the benefits of economic gains and collaboration, tourism can also contribute to enhancing social justice, inclusion, and peacebuilding. Other studies extend this claim, demonstrating the opportunities for tourism to improve relations amongst former enemies and for marginalized groups to self-represent (Causevic & Lynch, 2011; Novelli et al., 2012). A common thread across these studies is the importance of considering community-driven priorities and promoting collaboration among stakeholders.

Many scholars suggest a holistic view and bottom-up approach are necessary for achieving sustainable tourism development in conflict-affected contexts (e.g. Guasca et al., 2021; Häusler & Baumgartner, 2014). According to Guasca et al. (2021) “the aim [of tourism initiatives] should be to amplify the voices of people on the ground,” rather than having top-down pre-conceived notions of sustainability and peacebuilding in tourism planning (p. 14). For
example, Buultjens et al.’s (2016) assessed post-conflict recovery of tourism in Sri Lanka and showed how top-down government policies were successful in supporting large tourism operators rather than community needs and small-scale business priorities. Their results demonstrate increased inequality between vulnerable community groups and large tourism operators, which in turn threatened the medium to long-term sustainability of the tourism sector.

In recent years, the concept of inclusive tourism has gained international attention as a meaningful response to the biased and inequitable top-down models that dominate tourism sector planning. Inclusive tourism, a form of sustainable tourism, aims to provide economic and sociocultural benefits for marginalized groups (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). However, societies experiencing prolonged conflict present a special case in that sharply divergent interests and attitudes about the relationship between tourism planning and development can create deep social divides among stakeholders. For example, Holland’s (2000) study in Albania points out how decades of suppression and violence created serious barriers for engaging diverse stakeholders in participatory techniques. She highlights how tourism stakeholder engagement, which aims to identify “common histories and inter-linked cultures” in the face of turmoil and conflict, can help build social cohesion and allow diverse stakeholders to work towards common goals (p. 510).

Significantly, diverse stakeholders may have different goals and interests in sustainable tourism development (Timur & Getz, 2009), as the terms sustainable development and sustainable tourism have subjective meanings among different groups of people (Liu, 2003; Waas et al., 2011). By definition a stakeholder is “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organizations objectives” (Freeman 1984, p. 46). Important stakeholder groups in tourism planning may include local businesses, employees, residents,
activist groups, tourists, national business chains, competitors, and government (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Thus, it is important to understand what sustainable tourism development means in the context of place and local stakeholders affected.

Despite growing scholarship assessing stakeholders’ perceptions in non-conflict tourism destinations (e.g. D’ Mello et al., 2016, Timur & Getz, 2009), there is limited research assessing how tourism stakeholders embrace or define sustainable tourism development in conflict-affected societies. Bamyan Province presents an ideal case study for identifying necessary components for sustainable tourism development in a conflict setting according to local tourism stakeholders’ perceptions and experiences. Bamyan is recovering from over three decades of war, has a growing community working to revive its tourism industry, and has Afghanistan’s only bachelor’s degree program in tourism at Bamyan University.

This study explores, for the first time in Afghanistan, tourism stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of sustainable tourism development and their interpretation or vision of inclusive tourism. Grounded in inclusive tourism and stakeholder theory, we conducted in-depth interviews in Bamyan Province with 37 owners, managers, administrators, and leaders from the following subsectors: hotel/restaurant; handicraft; development aid; government departments; academia, and other small tourism business. Our hope is that recommendations will emerge from stakeholders’ perceptions and experiences for supporting sustainable tourism strategies and policies. Furthermore, we hope our findings will inform tourism sector-related initiatives in Bamyan to incorporate sustainability in tourism education and training for the next generation of tourism leaders.

This chapter begins by discussing the literature on inclusive and sustainable tourism development and briefly charts the context of tourism in Bamyan Province. Next, we describe
our qualitative methods. We then investigate tourism stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development framed by prominent themes of hospitality, gender empowerment, cultural heritage, and nature. Finally, we discuss how our analysis helps us to better understand community-driven priorities for sustainable tourism development and adds to scholarly discussions on the advent of tourism as a tool for helping rebuild-conflict affected areas.

Inclusive and sustainable tourism development

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 16 (SDG16) includes an international commitment to peaceful and inclusive societies that resonates as an important component to sustainable development. SDG16 aims to ‘promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.’ Conveying the interdependent relationship between inclusivity and sustainable development supports a holistic view that extends to sustainable tourism development.

Applying an inclusive approach to sustainable tourism development requires understanding terminology. In this chapter we borrow definitions from Liu (2003) for sustainability, sustainable development (or sustainable tourism development), and sustainable tourism, including:

‘Sustainability’ is broadly considered state-focused which implies steady life conditions for generations to come; ‘sustainable development’ is more process-oriented and associated with managed changes that bring about improvement in conditions for those involved in such development. Similarly, sustainable tourism is conveniently defined as all types of tourism (conventional or alternative forms) that are compatible with or contribute to sustainable development. (pp. 460-461)

In other words, sustainability refers to the goals, whereas sustainable development and sustainable tourism refers to the process (Waas et al., 2011). Forms of sustainable tourism that
are perceived to be compatible with sustainable development include, for example, ecotourism, community-based tourism, responsible tourism, volunteer tourism, rural tourism, and inclusive tourism. Therefore, supporting inclusive tourism is one approach towards supporting sustainable tourism development.

In a special issue of *Tourism Geographies* dedicated to inclusive tourism, Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) challenge us to think critically about how tourism can support a holistic range of sustainable development outcomes for marginalized groups. They define inclusive tourism as “transformative tourism in which marginalized groups are engaged in ethical production or consumption of tourism and the sharing of its benefits” (p. 592). Expanding further on their definition, they explain:

> Who is marginalized will vary from place to place but this could include the very poor, ethnic minorities, women and girls, differently abled people and other groups who lack power and/or voice. Ethical production and consumption is a key component of the definition of inclusive tourism. This includes responsibility for other people, and for the environment. In terms of ‘transformative’, this could mean addressing inequality, overcoming the separation of different groups living in different places, challenging stereotypes or generalized histories, and opening people up to understanding the situation of minorities. (p. 592)

Whereas inclusive tourism clearly overlaps with other forms of sustainable tourism aimed at fostering social responsibility and environmental protection, it is distinct in that it specifically aims to include new people and places in tourism consumption and achieve more equitable forms of tourism development for marginalized groups (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) go on to provide a framework for inclusive tourism that consists of the following six components: 1) overcoming barriers to disadvantaged groups to access tourism as producers or consumers; 2) facilitating self-representations by those who are marginalized or oppressed, so their stories can be told and their culture represented in ways that are meaningful to them; 3) challenging dominant power relations; 4) widening the range of
people who contribute to decision-making about development of tourism; 5) providing opportunities for new places to be on the tourism map; and 6) encouraging learning, exchange and mutually beneficial relationships which promote understanding and respect between ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’ (p. 593).

Although there are tremendous challenges (historical, political, socio-cultural) to successfully changing systems to be inclusive, two recent studies provide examples of how components of inclusive tourism have been achieved in conflict-affected contexts. In Cambodia, Biddulph (2018) illustrated how social enterprises were achieving components of inclusive tourism through providing employment, education, and health opportunities for marginalized rural groups. Moreover, Biddulph described how the social enterprises were providing opportunities for local artisans to showcase traditional Cambodian arts, connecting them with their culture and supporting post-conflict cultural revival. In Columbia, Gausca et al.’s (2020) case study presented an example of how tourism initiatives are creating a new vision for development and peace for peasant communities impacted by decades of war. Their study demonstrated how tourism is generating equitable economic growth and environmental protection as well as empowering the peasant communities to self-represent and overcome decades of stigmatization as dangerous insurgents and dejected victims. Despite challenges, these examples suggest the importance of community-driven approaches for achieving favourable outcomes for inclusive tourism in conflict-affected societies.

Our study expands on this work by engaging marginalized groups in Bamyan, Afghanistan in a conversation about their visions for sustainable tourism development which directly speaks to components of inclusive tourism. Furthermore, by designing a methodology
around stakeholder inclusion, we explore tourism stakeholders’ voices for how inclusive tourism can play a meaningful role in representing their culture.

**The tourism sector in Bamyan, Afghanistan**

In the central highlands of Afghanistan, tourism stakeholders in Bamyan Province are actively working to establish the region as a domestic and international tourism destination. The physical landscape, cultural heritage, ethnic cultures, and relative security in the province appeal to domestic and international tourists like nowhere else in Afghanistan.

Situated in the scenic Hindu Kush Mountains, the province (14,175 km², 5,473 sq mi) has a high alpine landscape with diverse physical features, containing deep gorges, glaciated mountains, high elevation pastures, and irrigated agriculture valleys. The physical landscape has a wide variety of natural resources and biodiversity, which provide another draw for tourists. Afghanistan’s first national park, Band-e Amir National Park (BNP), which is recognized for its scenic mineral-rich lakes that are reputed to have healing properties, is located in the province. Another important natural asset to the province is Shah-Foladi Protected Area, the third protected area in the country recognized for special conservation importance.

Tourism activities are also centered on the tangible features of Bamyan’s cultural heritage. Bamyan was a vital waypoint along the Silk Road and has an inspiring history of arts and religious developments from Buddhist (1st to 13th centuries A.D.) and Islamic (13th century A.D.) eras. The landscape is adorned with Buddhist relics and monastic caves, Islamic fortifications, and ruins of a royal citadel said to have been destroyed by the armies of Chinggis Khan in the thirteenth century. The most esteemed works of art are the empty niches where two colossal Buddhas that were built in the sixth and seventh centuries CE once stood at 53m and 38m in height. The Taliban partially destroyed these landmarks in 2001. UNESCO awarded
Bamyan Valley, where the Buddhas and other significant heritage sites reside, World Heritage Site status in 2003.

In addition to cultural heritage, the lifeways and traditions of Bamyan’s ethnic groups provides a unique opportunity for host-tourist interactions. Bamyan Province has an estimated population of 478,424 people and comprises of pastoralists and subsistence farmers living at elevations above 2800 m (NSIA, 2019). The region’s ethnic groups have deeply rooted values and traditions promoting peaceful social interactions, against ever-changing contemporary influences. A full encapsulation of the unique cultural attributes is beyond the scope of this chapter, but our data presented below revealed insights into a prevalent culture of hospitality and welcoming tourists from all walks of life. For some residents, an openness towards tourists is associated with their sense of identity connected to Bamyan’s history of being located at the crossroads of civilizations on the Silk Road; for others their open-mindedness has been influenced by western ideals of equality (Chiovenda, 2015).

Bamyan Province is comprised of individuals identifying with different ethnic categories, namely Hazaras, Saadat, and Tajiks. Hazaras are the majority ethnic group in Bamyan Province. There is no census data on ethnic populations in Bamyan Province. However, in Markaz Bamyan, the commercial and administrative center of the Province, Hazaras are estimated to compose 75 percent of the total population (Aldparvar, 2015). There are different theories circulating about the origins of Hazaras; some sources claim they descended from the Mongol armies who invaded Afghanistan in the 13th century. However, some Hazaras claim they trace their ancestors to the Gandhāran Buddhists (Chiovenda, 2014a). The majority of Hazaras are Shi’a Muslims who have experienced a long history of religious and ethnic marginalization and
persecution. Melissa Choivenda (2014b), who has written extensively about the marginalization of Hazaras explains,

Hazaras have always occupied one of the lowest rungs in the hierarchy of social status, and have at times suffered persecution and violence, have been forced off their lands, and have had very little chance of obtaining education and work other than as subsistence farmers, laborers, or servants. (p. 413)

As recently as 2004, Hazaras “achieved parity with other groups under the constitution... which specifically recognized the legitimacy of Shi’a legal practices” (Barfield, 2010, p. 29). Presently, despite the recent targeting of Hazaras in the country, some of the Hazara people see the Afghan situation as relatively tranquil and opportunistic against their history of political and economic marginalization. They have taken advantage of their access to education, power in the state (Choivenda, 2015), and the economic and social proceeds of servicing tourists in the tourism industry.

The second largest ethnic group in Bamyan Province is Saadat, or Sayid, comprising of approximately 15 percent of the population in Markaz Bamyan (Adlparvar, 2015). In Bamyan, Saadat commonly identify as Shi’a by sect and define their membership through the unilineal descent from the Prophet. Culturally and linguistically, they have widely assimilated into the regional Hazara culture, but maintain their own ethnic identity and certain traditions and beliefs. In BNP, Saadat are the main tourism stakeholder group with 14 Saadat communities residing in the park.

The third largest ethnic group, Tajiks, compose approximately 10 percent of the population in Markaz Bamyan (Adlparvar, 2015). They are commonly categorized by other locals and the state as non-tribalized Dari-speaking Sunni Muslims (Brasher, 2011). Tajiks, however, may name themselves according to their local lineage, geographical area (river valley, town, or village cluster) or occupational group (Brasher, 2011; Glatzer, 1998). A wave of
settlement of Tajiks in Bamyan Province occurred in the 1890s when the lands were integrated into the Afghan state. Tajiks controlled Markaz Bamyan until 1995. Today, several prominent Tajiks are owners of the larger hotels in Markaz Bamyan, but overall this ethnic group constitutes a smaller percentage of the tourism stakeholders in the province.

The tourism sector has experienced many ups and downs due to Afghanistan’s political and security situation and ongoing internal instabilities. Before the Soviet-Afghan War began in 1978, Bamyan was a popular destination amongst archaeologists and international tourists “retracing the routes of the early pilgrims through South Asia along the so-called ‘Hippie Trail’” (Meharry, 2020, p. 234). Since the end of the Soviet-Afghan War in 1989, Afghanistan has experienced subsequent demise into civil wars. From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban took control of the capital of Kabul and two-thirds of the country, imposing repressive public policy decrees including prohibitions against art, music, western fashion, women’s access to public spaces, and education for females (Collins, 2011). The country’s two decades of fighting virtually destroyed the tourism industry in Bamyan except for a small domestic tourism market. Since the US-backed fall of the Taliban in 2001, residents in Bamyan have sought to recreate the tourism industry. However, there are still ongoing threats and movements by anti-governmental entities. Perhaps most vexing to the industry is that the roads connecting Bamyan to Kabul have sections still held by the Taliban, making road travel for locals incredibly dangerous and nearly unheard of for foreigners.

Despite the impact of conflict in the country, approximately 400,000 domestic tourists visited Bamyan in 2019, as well as 500 international tourists, making apparent the appeal for tourists. Although the Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically decreased international and domestic travel, the tourism stakeholders remain optimistic that the tourism numbers will soon recover
with the lifting of restrictions on travel and global vaccine roll out. The main tourism sites in the province are Markaz Bamyan and BNP due to their infrastructure and proximal location to cultural heritage sites and recreational opportunities. Efforts have been made by the government, international aid organizations, and the private sector to build the tourism infrastructure in these two sites by means of an airport, paved roads, cultural center and museum, hotels and cafés, women’s handicraft bazaar, and park amenities. In Markaz Bamyan the hotel scene offers a variety of accommodations, from million-dollar investments to simple mud-brick hotels. In BNP accommodations are more basic with homestays and mud-brick guesthouses, with only one hotel meeting the standards of the average international tourist. Some of the infrastructure in Bamyan conforms to the region’s rich architectural heritage while some buildings, such as high investment hotels, were built with twentieth century modern designs that stand out in the landscape.

As various initiatives have gotten underway, there has been a general lack of a shared approach or coordinated vision for tourism development in Bamyan. Despite the development of three master plans in Markaz Bamyan for preserving the cultural areas and planning for urban development, management has not been binding in a regulatory manner, nor have the plans specifically focused on tourism. At best, the plans serve as guidelines for the government. Furthermore, as in many other cases in developing countries, international agendas have been mixed in terms of perceived benefits from the local communities when facilitating the development of such government-endorsed plans (Jansen & Toubekis, 2020).

Another challenge for the tourism sector is that since 2015, there have been fewer international organizations supporting the tourism industry in Bamyan, partly due to the security and political situation. The lack of international support has sparked local stakeholders to
collaboratively pursue their own initiatives. Still, without partnerships, trained professionals, a lack of plans backed by the wider community, and uncertainty over the political future, it is challenging to advance the tourism industry (Nagaoka, 2020). These challenges stress the need for understanding tourism stakeholders’ perceptions and insights into the meaning of sustainable tourism development to develop consensus on community-driven priorities.

In response to the growing need to build and strengthen the capacity of the tourism industry and its stakeholders, Bamyan University (BU) established a Department of Tourism in 2010. The Department of Tourism is the first and only undergraduate tourism program in the country. Nevertheless, the department currently lacks curriculum development expertise and working partnerships with the tourism sector for embedding sustainability into the curriculum. Given that sustainability is not currently integrated into the curriculum, this case study documents the first-level efforts to integrate sustainability into the curriculum, with the aim of informing tourism curriculum design relevant to the societal needs in Bamyan and other conflict-affected contexts.

**Methods and approach**

A qualitative approach using in-depth interviews was selected to explore tourism stakeholders’ experiences and perspectives of sustainable tourism development in Bamyan, Afghanistan. In-depth interviewing method necessitates ‘active asking and listening’ and aims to elicit rich information from the perspective of the participant (Liamputtong, 2010). The interviews were organized around a set of eight open-ended questions. The open-ended questions addressed broad topics to reduce the influence on participant responses and to avoid using terms, such as sustainable development, that might be confusing for the participants. The first three questions aimed to elicit participants’ description of Bamyan and visions for the future.
following two questions aimed to capture participants’ perceptions of tourists and what they would like tourists to experience in Bamyan. The final three questions aimed to prompt the participants’ concerns, organizational goals, and suggested actions and strategies for tourism. Probing questions were asked to encourage conversation and elaboration of responses.

Interviews occurred between June and December, 2016. Interviews took approximately 20 to 60 minutes to complete and were facilitated in Dari or Hazaragi languages by a translator unless the participant choose to conduct the interview in English. Several of the interviews were shortened to only 20 minutes due to unforeseen security threats in the province. Thirty-seven tourism stakeholders working in various sub-sectors of the tourism industry in Markaz Bamyan and BNP participated in the interviews. A stakeholder theory-driven approach guided the development of our sampling approach. Stakeholder theory emphasizes the importance of involving diverse stakeholders in decision making processes and planning (Freeman, 1984). Chain referral sampling was used to help reach broad representation from important and diverse sub-sector affiliations (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). First, the lead author who had spent three years working with the tourism sector in Markaz Bamyan recruited participants with the help of a local field assistant. Then the sampling was expanded by asking study participants to identify other stakeholders with relevant characteristics. Chain referral sampling was finalized once the saturation point was reached. Study participants represented the three ethnic groups; however, there was not an intention to capture ethnic affiliation due to the highly sensitive and complex nature of Afghan identity.³ Demographic data of the tourism stakeholders interviewed is provided in Table 2.1.
Table 2. 1 Demographics of tourism stakeholders interviewed (N=37)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particular</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location of resident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markaz Bamyan</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band-e Amir National Park</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-sector affiliation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel/Restaurant</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicraft</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development aid</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other small business or association</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazara</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayed</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajik</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English. NVivo qualitative software was used to analyze the data using a grounded theory approach allowing themes to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data was initially coded to nine concepts. Concept mapping was then used to identify the connections between the emerging codes in a visual hierarchy with different levels of concepts and sub-concepts (Ligita et al., 2020). Through this inductive process, four key themes from the nine concepts were identified. Validation of key themes was based on the legitimated point of view of the lead author and her knowledge of the social reality of the tourism sector in Bamyan.
**Results**

This section evaluates and compares the tourism stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of sustainable tourism development in Bamyan, Afghanistan. Interestingly, the data patterns revealed that tourism stakeholders strongly defined sustainable tourism development according to their socio-cultural values of hospitality, gender empowerment, cultural heritage and nature. In the following, we explore these four themes.

**Hospitality**

Interviews with the tourism stakeholders suggested that hospitality was an important component of sustainable tourism development expressed through values of inclusivity. The culture of hospitality was mentioned by 23 tourism stakeholders (62%). Tourism stakeholders used many terms such as humanity (*bashareyat* پشیریت), honor, friendship (*dosti* دوستی), welfare, good treatment, good behavior, brotherhood (*baradari* برادری), relaxation, comfort, and peace (*sol* صلح) to express or define hospitality (*mehman nawazi* مهمان نوازی). The data revealed that hospitality symbolized shared values of inclusivity for tourism stakeholders that was important to their reputation for attracting more tourists to Bamyan. Additionally, for the Hazara tourism stakeholders, they voiced that sharing their culture of hospitality, founded on principles of inclusivity, was perceived as a way to build interethnic relations and improve their status in society.

To explore how hospitality symbolized shared values of inclusivity, one tourism stakeholder working with the United Nations explained how hospitality was deeply rooted in local peoples’ history and traditions. He mentioned that prior to leisure tourism becoming a phenomenon in Afghanistan, local people would “live with the guests.” They would talk, invite, and hospitably indulge guests who came from outside the home. Incidentally, he extends that
today the centrality of hospitality for tourists is “very concrete on the mind of these people. . . and they are really really good at hospitality.”

Having a reputation and drive for their expression of hospitality characterized by their generous disposition signifies local peoples’ traditions and identity which has expanded as a culture of welcoming tourists. There is an expectation that tourists will be hospitably welcomed, and even brought into personal living spaces by residents as a natural extension of hospitality, as explained by a tourism business owner in BNP:

When tourists come to Bamyan, people will greet them, talking with them, take them home. If they don’t know the way, they guide them without any shackle or fear. At least if they don’t know them and they are with family, they take them home and offer them a place and food. . . and if they don’t have anything to give them at least they give them a glass of tea.

To understand if hospitality rituals extended equally to different types of international and domestic tourists, tourism stakeholders were asked if they preferred hosting specific types of tourists. Over 80 percent expressed great interest in welcoming all types of tourists to Bamyan. This is shown in the responses below, in which tourism stakeholders made no distinction in their preferences towards certain kinds of tourists to Bamyan:

Bamyan people have an open arm for any kind of tourist.

Here whoever is coming [should] think that they are in their mother’s abdomen and feel peace and security.

Tourists coming to Band-e Amir are all the same for me. Whether they are Afghan or non-Afghan, whether rich or not rich, we respect them all.

Our religion does not know the border. All the countries of the world, which is 186 countries, can come . . . As long as they do not harm us there should be no border for us.
These responses reflect how inclusive values of respect and cultural acceptance emerged as important components of hospitality as tourism stakeholders personally extend their hospitality to all tourists.

Through welcoming all types of tourists, the tourism stakeholders hope that their character of hospitality will lead to a sustainable tourism industry. The following excerpts from two hotel managers demonstrate how they want to ensure that tourists return home with a particular impression of their hospitality:

If you look all over Afghanistan you can’t find people humbler and more hospitable than Bamyan people. . . In Bamyan it is not important where you are from. They respect you as a guest. . . So when they (tourists) are leaving Bamyan they must take back a good memory of Bamyan with them. . . They must say something good about Bamyan and Bamyan people and this can encourage some other people to come visit Bamyan.

And our general goal is. . . when a tourist comes here and when he is. . . going back to their home, they go with a more open mind, more open understanding, [and] praise that there are such hotels in Bamyan, such people, and such hospitality. . . I want them to be our messenger when we do humanity [and] honor, so they take our message to the place that they are living and persuade other tourists to come here. . . our manner and behavior with them can bring them back. They can guarantee our sustainability at least.

The two quotations above provide examples of how tourism stakeholders’ envisioned a word-of-mouth marketing strategy where tourists would remember their hospitality and upon returning home would encourage other people to come to Bamyan while also returning themselves. In other words, some tourism stakeholders perceived that spreading the news of their hospitality in the larger world would help ensure the economic sustainability of the tourism industry.

However, worth noting was the concern that cultural displays of hospitality could potentially be risky. One stakeholder who is a local hotel owner shed light on the potential for tourists to exploit the generosity of their host’s hospitality, as he put it:
In the hotel business, ethics means having good behavior, not getting angry with people. For example, you will say what is the rent of this room? For example, [I say] three thousand [afghanis]. And you say I will pay one thousand. . . ok no problem go and use it and pay one thousand or even don’t pay at all. This is good behavior.

The tourism stakeholders’ generous hospitality has a clear vulnerability to economic exploitation in the marketplace, revealing an earnest critique to the economic sustainability of their culture of hospitality.

The data also revealed that perceptions of sustainable tourism development were tied to how Hazara tourism stakeholders seek to advance their ethnic status in society and build interethnic relations through tourism. The challenges of ethnic discrimination that Bamyan residents, specifically ethnic Hazaras, face historically and currently was mentioned by 16 Hazara tourism stakeholders (55%). Many stakeholders expressed that the biggest obstacle impeding tourism development and progress in Bamyan province was based on ethnic discrimination. One of the instructors at Bamyan University explained that since the international intervention in 2001, Bamyan Province has been experiencing a “Golden Opportunity” for development. However, he believes progress is still slow due to political, religious, and ethnic tensions. He explained how Bamyan’s residents have struggled for improved rights and support from the government:

There is not that much support [from the government] to accommodate you, to push you forward. Then there are... so many political and ethnic reasons, that the ethnic view that Bamyan is recognized as a Hazara based province and there are some politics behind that too, to restrict you from progress and development.

Hazara tourism stakeholders provided other perceived examples of how they have been oppressed by the Afghan state and denied access to infrastructure, security, business opportunities, and education. A hotel owner provided a specific example of how discrimination against Hazaras in their homeland in Bamyan has impeded their development:
In Afghanistan for example the price for per kilowatts electricity is 3 AFN in Kabul but here in Bamyan we pay 46 AFN. Do you know why? It’s just because of being related to Hazara people, the government itself doesn’t let it develop. . . If these people develop they will build or make different things by their own and they don’t need the government.

With his voice raised, another hotel owner explained his frustration:

It’s not fair for any religion. . . It takes a long time to make Afghan people open-minded. Afghans are not open-minded yet, you don’t accept me, I don’t accept you. When we accept each other, no need for a foreigner to build our country, we will do it ourselves.

Although these quotes allude to development challenges broader than the challenges with the tourism industry in Bamyan, they demonstrate tourism stakeholders’ values of inclusivity and desire for nation-building through building interethnic relations at the societal level. The Hazaras strong interest in building societal interethnic relations is deep-rooted in their perception that they are still considered second-class citizens who are neglected by the Afghan government.

Many tourism stakeholders articulated that a function of their hospitality is to break down ethnic barriers and create a more open-minded and culturally accepting society. A hotel owner explained how sharing their culture of hospitality with domestic tourists can be used as a tool to build interethic relations:

We want those who come from different provinces for example, from North, South, from Kandahar, Logar, Paktia, and Helmand, when they enter Bamyan with fighting spirit and stay here for some time we want them to be relaxed and experience complete humanity, peace, and an atmosphere of brotherhood. . . Specifically we want to say that when they go home they must have message of peace and brotherhood with them. And have a better definition of Bamyan and our hospitality should be a little shown.

Another tourism stakeholder working in the handicraft business echoes the importance of having domestic tourists experience their culture of hospitality founded on principles of inclusivity:

. . . domestic [tourists] should come to Bamyan and see Bamyan peoples’ culture. . . The reason behind some of the discrimination is lack of understanding different cultures. Maybe if we would know the culture of Pashtun people, maybe we wouldn’t
be a fanatic against them. And if Tajik people against Hazara people, if they would know their culture, they maybe wouldn’t be fanatic against them. . . And we want all of them in national level. It can decrease discriminations and some of the negative attitudes that we have about some tribes.

The above two quotations reflect tourism stakeholders’ perceptions that through host-guest interactions, domestic tourists will get to know them, their culture, and their values. This experience is capable of increasing mutual and cultural understanding and addressing ethnic discrimination between Afghans.

**Gender empowerment**

Tourism stakeholders also identified that gender empowerment is an important component for sustainable tourism development. Recent education, employment, and leadership opportunities for women in Bamyan has challenged society to grapple with changing realities of gender roles and relations, especially in the tourism sector. Many of the tourism stakeholders mentioned that the increased levels of female education in the province over the last 10 years have had a profound impact on society. Twenty-two tourism stakeholders (15 males) expressed that gender empowerment is an important component of sustainable development, while 11 stakeholders provided specific examples of how tourism provides economic and social opportunities for women.

Several of the female handicraft and restaurant business owners spoke with pride about how they are supporting economic independence and autonomy for women. For example, in Markaz Bamyan, a women’s bazaar was opened in 2015 and over 45 women have seized the opportunity to establish their own handicraft businesses and associations with their main market being domestic and international tourists. A female business owner explained:

One of our goals is women’s empowerment and...[for women] to be economically independent. . . Tourists who come here, they see that we, the people of Afghanistan,
both women and men, can work together. It means we have the ability to move forward alongside the men.

Many of the female handicraft business owners also described their intent to hire more women. A female government representative explained how tourism can economically benefit women who might not have the opportunity to work outside the home: “handicrafts are... good for women who are unemployed in their homes. They are encouraged to sew and sell things.” A male handicraft owner echoed the importance of women’s economic independence by explaining that in Bamyan women have the right to “develop their own economy and their husbands too.”

Tourism stakeholders also identified how gender empowerment in tourism can lead to social opportunities through the methods of self-determination, acceptance in the workplace, and access to participate in recreation. For example, a business owner explained the impact her tourism business has had on her female employees’ self-determination and acceptance in a formal work setting:

...when they were at home they didn’t have the mentality of accepting each other. We worked about two or three years in this case so that they accept each other, so they can work together... [and] respect each other’s approach... Women are working in a place, sitting together, accept each other, and also want to work for their own capacity and show it to the people or the world. This is the best memory.

In another example, a handicraft businessman spoke with pride in the accomplishments of Bamyan women: “In case of sport, they participate in world competitions. Yesterday there was a bike riding competition in Kabul and one of them was from Bamyan. There was another bike rider who received the peace award. She was from Bamyan too.” Women’s participation in recreational activities has increased through the promotion of tourism activities in Bamyan. A provincial government director explained how recreational and cultural tourism activities have opened the doors for women and girls in Bamyan to participate in activities that were previously culturally inappropriate in the public’s eye. She explained one of Bamyan’s cultural celebrations,
that was advertised across Afghanistan, brought in tourists from all over the country. She stressed the social importance of having the women of Bamyan participate in these events: “we should. . . make sure that women can also have fun to strengthen their spirits and minds. And to make it clear to women that their own province has suitable places for recreation.” A government leader concluded on how building women’s participation has contributed to societal change and the community’s social empowerment founded on principles of inclusivity: “Bamyan people are very cultural and open and are interested in education, gender condition, women’s rights and their participation in different social, political, and cultural fields are developing.”

**Cultural heritage**

The third main theme that emerged from the interviews with the tourism stakeholders was their interest and concerns with preserving the intangible and tangible features of their cultural heritage through the process of sustainable tourism development. Tourism stakeholders conveyed the importance of their local culture and traditions (84 %) and built heritage (68 %) as important features of their cultural heritage. The following quotes summarizes some ways in which stakeholders described and connected with their cultural heritage:

. . . the people have a valuable culture and they have a lot of respect for their cultural monuments. . . and the Bamyan Buddha, when it was destroyed, the people of Bamyan were spiritually damaged.

Our culture is old and our clothes are all indigenous, our felt and gloves are all old. . . We have two religions Hanafi (Sunni) and Jafari (Shi’a).

Antiquities are our culture, our possessions, and our values. When we preserve our values and our possessions, we preserve everything. A nation that preserves its culture preserves everything, and a nation that loses its’ culture loses everything.

As the tourism stakeholders explained their rich culture and historical significance of their cultural heritage they inherently wanted to share and promote the unique features of their
place with tourists. One hotel owner articulated that while he always respects tourists’ cultures, he feels it is important to share his culture with them: “I always do my best to declare my culture and customs and traditions to domestics and foreigners, and show it, teach them and always I promote it.” Similarly, a stakeholder working for a local NGO explained the various benefits of sharing their culture with tourists:

We can show our culture to them (tourists) and explain that we, Hazaras or Bamyani people, are different with others and our cultural characteristics differentiate us from others. For example, music, for example, poems, for example, songs, for example, some of local games we are trying to save them, and they bring us money, improve our life, and they distinguish us from others.

This excerpt was reflective and typical of other comments made by stakeholders describing the important role that sharing their culture with tourists has in preserving and maintaining their identity, while also providing economic benefits. It was evident in the tourism stakeholders’ narratives, that they all want tourism to improve their economy, but not at the price of who they are. They see the uniqueness of their cultural heritage as an economic resource, that if managed well, can help preserve their culture.

While tourism stakeholders wanted tourists to experience the unique features of Bamyan life, several also wanted tourists to know the stories of their troubled past that holds strong meaning in Bamyan society today. Most of the stakeholders mentioned that tourists should visit the two Buddha statues built in the 6th and 7th century which were partially destroyed by a group associated with the Taliban in 2001. One stakeholder was asked what they want tourists to know about the Buddha statues:

If they take a memory with themselves, I think first of all it should be about Bamyan Buddhas which were destroyed by the enemy of Afghanistan’s people. It’s a bad memory that they take with them. . . the violence of the enemy of Afghanistan’s people. . . And another one is that they deprive us from one of the seven wonders of the world. . . Another reason, they don’t want the Central Highlands to be independent. We had all the resources, but they destroyed them.
This stakeholder perceived the destruction of the Buddhas as a deliberate attack to destroy their identity and as a loss for humanity as a whole. For some Hazaras, and potentially other ethnic groups in Bamyan, the Buddhas provide a spiritual identity and a connection to their history along the Silk Road, the cross-roads of civilization. These excerpt trends with other comments made by the tourism stakeholders about how their history of marginalization and dispossession have asserted their rights to self-determination, progress, and wanting to be heard in the Afghan and international community. Interacting with tourists by sharing their living cultural landscape along with a history of dispossession that have shaped Bamyan society is perceived as appropriate and beneficial for the local tourism development. Therefore, it can be concluded that providing a “real” and “authentic” tourism experience is at the heart and minds of the stakeholders’ vision for sustainable tourism development.

While tourism stakeholders interviewed held similar values and connections to their cultural heritage, there were some challenges and also diverse views towards how to preserve their cultural heritage. One challenge identified was the threats to preserving the tangible features of their cultural heritage sites. A few tourism stakeholders provided specific examples of the threats of vandalism by tourists and perceived lack of heritage management. For example, a small business owner explained the issue with graffiti vandalism:

In case of preserving heritages, if the government does not consider special measures, these heritages will be destroyed. . . Those [tourists] who come to Bamyan have no awareness. For example. . . they write memento (graffiti) on the walls. When tourists come, there must be someone to guide them to not to write mementos.

The second challenge identified had to do with maintaining tradition and culture in the face of modernization. The data showed that tourism stakeholders’ widely embraced modernization and development including infrastructure and education. However, there was concern that traditions are dying. Some tourism stakeholders expressed concern that their
traditional dress, music, games, ceremonies, and festivals were being threatened by modernization. A woman working in the handicraft business, spoke of what she refers to as the cultural invasion that is happening Bamyan:

I can tell you that the culture of Afghan people is being questioned already, via those media that broadcast some movies. Currently, none of the Afghan people or a very low percentage of them use their own customs and traditions, especially in case of wearing clothes. Now what I think is that in comparison with us (Afghans) the foreigners like our [traditional] clothes more. They are interested in our culture, but we are interested in their culture. The other countries had its special effect on us, and this cultural invasion has made us to be far from our culture.

A young professor at Bamyan University echoed this by reflecting on his own lack of knowledge of his ethnic traditions and further explained why their culture is changing:

. . . I am not really able to talk really on the traditional way of our indigenous people, sometimes I am missing the words and it is, of course, it is not (only) from the tourism, but still the progress, the history that has changed, the time that has changed, including that the tourism is also there.

Tourism stakeholders recognized the negative cultural impacts of tourism, — paradoxically they also saw tourism as a potential catalyst to help preserve their customs and authenticity. When tourism stakeholders were asked what they want tourists to see and do when they visit Bamyan, the data revealed their vested interest in promoting a mixture of traditional tourism activities and modern leisure activities. A small tourism business owner listed the tourism products he envisioned to have promoted in Bamyan:

. . . handicrafts or local products, exhibition of local foods, . . . also cultural festivals, those festivals which at least show our culture . . . our very old culture which is almost dead now. We want to make it alive again by holding Nawroz (New Year) festivals, Silk Road Festivals, and such festivals. . . for example, ski competition or Tour de Bamyan Bicycle Riding program, with such things or with the marathon we can have their (tourists’) presence here.

The last part of this quote demonstrates the vested interest in modern leisure activities. In recent years recreational sports, such as skiing, cycling, marathons, water polo, and peddle boating have
become popular activities for tourists, inspired and supported by international relations, and are slowly changing the cultural landscape of Bamyan. For example, at present in Markaz Bamyan, some women cycle for leisure and recreation. Cycling in the past was prohibited for women to engage in and is still frowned upon in most of Afghan society. Individuals in Bamyan have started a ski club and throughout the winter season the club organizes ski trips in the nearby mountains for locals. Part of the cultural shift that is taking place in the mindset of some of the tourism stakeholders, especially the younger generation who are more drawn to international influences, presents the challenges of safeguarding traditions with modern tourism activities.

**Nature**

Expanding on the interest in preservation expressed by tourism stakeholder’s concern for their cultural heritage, the fourth theme that emerged was their interest to share and preserve their natural environment through sustainable tourism development. Most of the tourism stakeholders (84%) expressed a strong connection to nature and an interest to have tourists experience their local environment. For example:

[Bamyan has] very unique natural beauty that cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

Bamyan is truly a place of happiness and lively and from every aspect. Bamyan is a place of relaxation for me. I feel completely comfortable with Bamyan. . . For example, one day you can go to Foladi valley, one day to Somarah valley, one day for biking, one day for horse riding. There are lots of opportunities in Bamyan. We use all these opportunities, the nature, weather, and history and we really enjoy all this.

[We should] explain the seasons to tourists and tell them about the beautiful and amazing places. . . For example, [tourists] should go to the valley of Gumaw (lost water) . . . It is very green and very beautiful.

When they (tourists) come during winter, I suggest they go over to the lake for fishing when the water is frozen. It will be a memory for them.
Although most of the tourism stakeholders expressed interest in nature-based tourism activities, two issues for sustainable tourism development arose regarding preserving their natural environment. First, several tourism stakeholders mentioned the increase in the number of tourists is putting pressure on the environment, especially in BNP: “This high number of tourists creates a lot of rubbish and putting a lot of plastic and these things are a challenge for the management of the national park.” Another commented on how tourists do not read the information signs in BNP: “They cut the seedlings and don’t care about what is written on those signs. For example, throwing fishing hooks into the water and catching fish. Those tourist should come who read the signs and use the rangers’ guidance.” These quotations typified tourism stakeholders’ perceptions of the impacts irresponsible behavior from tourists is having on the environment.

A second issue related to preserving the environment that emerged from the interview data was the contentious aspects in stakeholders’ perceptions for how BNP should be managed. Tourism stakeholders held different views on approaches to developing the tourism infrastructure in BNP. Some wanted to build new tourism facilities and create garden parks to enhance the aesthetics, while others saw this as threatening to the fundamental principles of a national park and to the wildlife. A representative from the Wildlife Conservation Organization working in BNP summarized the issue:

We had a delegate from the lower house of the parliament. They came and they said we should make a big wall, cement concrete wall, in front of the Hyber Lake to control all the water, all the water, and it should not be wasted. . . And also you should have a lot of flowers in the area. Then we explained it is good for city parks like Shar-e-naw Park in Kabul to plant different flowers. . . but in the national park it is not common. [If we don’t control] a lot of things will happen that are against the objective of the national park or protected area.
Two tourism stakeholders who were residents in Bamyan shared similar visions to the delegate from parliament about how to develop BNP for tourists:

It’s good to become more greener because Band-e Amir’s water I can tell you is probably the best water in the world. For encouraging tourists, seedlings must be planted and make Band-e Amir green. Band-e Amir doesn’t have electricity now. For instance, there should be lamps installed around the mosque and around the [natural] dam. . . [We should] use its water for people, so that we don’t leave water unused.

For example, electricity, and to take the water to the fields and plant seedlings. For example, take the water to that side (pointing to the mountain north of the entrance to BNP) and plant seedlings. Won’t it be beautiful in your idea?

The challenges of finding common ground to address differing views on natural resource use has been an ongoing sustainable development challenge for park managers. The management involves multiple levels of interest including international organizations, decision-makers at national levels, local government, and residents whose livelihoods depend on the tourism industry. The dilemma between development and preservation has shown that there is a not a one-size-fits all approach to tourism and environmental management.

Discussion

This study analyzed tourism stakeholders’ perceptions and experiences of inclusive and sustainable tourism development in Bamyan, Afghanistan. The tourism stakeholders in this study were tourism owners, managers, administrators as well as leaders from the hotel/restaurant, handicraft, aid organization, government, academia, and other small tourism business subsectors in Markaz Bamyan and BNP. The study demonstrated that stakeholders identified hospitality, gender empowerment, cultural heritage, and nature as important components of inclusive and sustainable tourism development in Bamyan.

Hospitality, a topic of breadth and depth, was an important component of tourism stakeholders shared cultural values. Tourism stakeholders repeatedly expressed the importance
of sharing their culture of hospitality, founded on inclusive principles of respect and cultural
acceptance, with domestic and international tourists. They also expressed the importance of
using hospitality to reinforce their identity and sustainably promote tourism through word-of-
mouth marketing. These observations parallel Coulson et al.’s (2014) study of the cultural codes
of Pashtun hospitality in Afghanistan which also emphasizes compassion and generosity towards
all types of guests. Therefore, despite the conflict tensions between different ethnic groups in
Afghanistan, hospitality is a common cultural value among some of the ethnic groups. By
extension, our study and Coulson et al.’s (2014) both highlight the potential for tourists to exploit
their hosts’ hospitality. Hence, for tourism stakeholders’ culture of hospitality to contribute to
inclusive and economically sustainable tourism development there must be some way to ensure
tourists do not economically exploit their hosts.

Additionally, Hazara tourism stakeholders saw their cultural codes of hospitality towards
tourists as a tool to potentially build interethnic relations and address challenges of
marginalization. Hospitality allows marginalized groups to gain influence and visibility by
showing domestic tourists from other regions their values of inclusivity and nation-building,
helping to overcome Afghan society’s ethnic, religious, and political biases. Supporting these
findings, scholars have noted that the shared identity among Hazaras centers on their experience
of marginalization (Bamik, 2018; Choivenda, 2014a, 2014b; Monsutti, 2005). Chiovenda
(2014a) explains that Hazaras in Bamyan perceive the underdevelopment in the province to be a
direct result of a systematic discrimination by the national government. Despite this, “a narrative
of inclusivity remains stronger as most Hazaras sincerely do want to build an inclusive Afghan
state” (Choivenda 2014b, p. 422). From this perspective, our findings align with two of the
components of inclusive tourism defined by Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) that speak to the
Hazara tourism stakeholders’ ambitions for tourism development. Firstly, “facilitating self-representations by those who are marginalized or oppressed, so their stories can be told and their culture represented in ways that are meaningful to them.” Then, secondly, “encouraging learning, exchange and mutually beneficial relationships which promote understanding and respect between ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’” (p. 593). Ultimately, our findings both connect with the framework of inclusive tourism as well as support previous research that identifies the potential for tourism to improve interethnic relations and for marginalized groups to progress in conflict-affected societies (Causevic & Lynch, 2011; Guasca et al., 2021; Novelli et al. 2012).

The second main theme, gender empowerment, was identified by tourism stakeholders as an important tool for inclusive and sustainable tourism development. Many stakeholders advocated for gender equality in sustainable development planning and strategies, challenging some of the harsh gender norms in Afghan society. Our findings revealed multiple examples that demonstrated opportunities for women to make progress in the tourism sector and see beneficial social and economic outcomes. These include economic independence as well as fostering women’s self-determination, acceptance in the workplace, and participation in recreational opportunities. Consistent with three of Scheyvens and Biddulph’s (2018) inclusive tourism components, women are 1) gaining access to tourism as producers, 2) challenging dominant power relations, and 3) encouraging mutually beneficial relationships through tourism activities. Similarly, Sheikhi’s (2015) study in Iran’s Baluchistan illustrated how tourism is increasing women’s social interactions and making their voices heard in traditional ethnic communities. Nevertheless, in conflict-affected contexts, scholarship on tourism and gender is understudied and could be a powerful tool for addressing gender issues.
The third and fourth main themes, cultural heritage and nature, were important for promoting and maintaining tourism stakeholders’ identity and sense of place. In general, tourism stakeholders viewed their cultural heritage and nature as critical elements of their landscape and were eager to share this with tourists. Sharing their cultural and nature meant providing tourists with an authentic experience through host-guest interactions, including showing tourists their cultural traditions such as food, games, music, ceremonies, and their heritage sites and outstanding natural attractions. For some ethnic Hazara tourism stakeholders, sharing the stories of their troubled history of social exclusion and dispossession was included as part of providing tourists with an authentic experience. Choivenda (2014b) confirms the importance of sharing this troubled history by noting for example, how the destruction of the Bamyan Buddha statues in 2001 are now intertwined with the stories of the Hazaras’ past. Notably, Buckley et al.’s (2008) case study with nomads in Mongolia found that “constructing tourism products based on their cultural landscapes may become one way for these peoples to reaffirm their own territorial and cultural identities, either for internal social or for external political reasons.” These observations are consistent with Scheyvens and Biddulph’s (2018) component of inclusive tourism that addresses how tourism can be used as a tool for marginalized groups to self-represent by sharing the complexity of their cultural landscapes and stories with tourists.

Tourism stakeholders expressed several challenges to preserving their cultural heritage and natural environment including the threats of modernization, damage to heritage sites and nature by tourists, and conflicting management ideas and approaches. As their cultural landscape has high value as a tourism destination post-conflict, development and recovery programs and their policies need to happen in close consultation with the community to find a peaceful path towards addressing these challenges (Buultjens et al., 2016; Hakim, 2009). However, with
Bamyan’s cultural landscape having a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the first national park in Afghanistan, international and national priorities and plans have not matched with local ones. Studies have found that previous planning processes for development and cultural preservation in Markaz Bamyan has had local community members underrepresented and marginalized in the process (Jansen & Toubekis, 2020; Sharifi, 2016). Ashworth and van der Aa (2002, p. 449) illuminate that cultural heritage in Bamyan holds a “national identity and ideology conflicted with an external claim not only of Buddhists but a wider world that regarded the statues of Bamyan in some sense as their heritage.” They extend that with tourism planning and development the “requirements of local communities should be paramount and local wishes respected” (p. 451). Thus, future tourism planning in Bamyan, needs to ensure that local communities’ ideals, visions, and sense of identity, founded on inclusive principles of hospitality, gender empowerment, cultural heritage, and the nature are prioritized. Our analysis provides a vital conceptual basis for understanding the tourism stakeholders’ interpretation of their present-day cultural landscape. We hope this study will serve as a useful tool for tourism policy planners seeking to achieve effective preservation of cultural and natural features in the future as tourism continues to grow.

**Future research**

This study provides several opportunities for future research. First, this chapter contributes to an emerging literature on inclusive tourism which is concerned with the use of tourism to build interethnic relations and to promote nation-building. Palmer’s (2007) research of the cultural representation of Kyrgyzstan raises important questions on the use of tourism as a nation-building tool. Palmer questioned whether tourism promotion of the ethnic Kyrgyz population signals further discrimination towards this group as they may be portrayed as ‘objects of
development’. As domestic and international tourism promotion for Bamyan advances, further research must explore how to present Bamyan’s destination image in align with the tourism stakeholders’ values of hospitality, gender empowerment, cultural heritage, and nature.

Second, our findings touched on the role of tourism in promoting social equality for women in Bamyan. However, our understanding of the relationship between tourism and gender equality in conflict-affected contexts remains largely unexplored. Future research could thoroughly explore how tourism can contribute to economic and social empowerment for women and society. Research examining the effect of tourism on gender norms, women’s participation, and gender ideology and discourse is also critical in conflict-affected contexts. Such research would help highlight the short and long-term impacts of tourism on women, their families, and society. This can also illuminate the ways that tourism can potentially confront gender issues and broader systems of oppression that affect women’s access to education/technology, child mortality, improved nutrition, lower fertility, etc.

Third, future research should explore theoretical and practical methods to integrate teaching the inclusive values of hospitality, gender, cultural heritage, and nature into tourism higher education and curriculum development at Bamyan University and elsewhere in the country. The theoretical and applied education is vital for equipping tourism students with the competencies to address the complex challenges of and opportunities for inclusive and sustainable tourism development.
Notes

1. ‘Non-tribal’ in this context refers to groups without a common ancestry or cultural, political, or social boundary (Glatzer, 1998).

2. The three master plans of Bamyan include the Cultural Master Plan of Bamyan supported by UNESCO (Jansen & Toubekis, 2013); Bamyan Strategic Plan supported by Laboratory for Social Geography, University of Florence (LaGes, 2018); Bamyan Master Plan developed by the Afghan Ministry of Urban Development published in Dari language in 2013.

3. Directly asking community members about their ethnic identity is not usually appropriate in Bamyan Province. Our local field assistant played an important role in maintaining a respectful and attentive interview process and one that treated the highly sensitive topic of ethnic identity with great care. As such, a direct question about ethnic identity was not included in our interview guide, and only brought up on the context of interviews when appropriate to ask respondents or when brought up by the respondents themselves.

4. The cultural landscape is defined as a geographic area that is shaped and influenced by the interactions between humans and natural systems (Birks et al., 1988; Hakim et al., 2009).
References


CHAPTER 3
Design Decisions for a Service Learning Course for Tourism Students in
Bamyan, Afghanistan

Introduction

Higher education has been recognized for its potential to contribute to inclusive and sustainable development through building students’ competencies and engaging with communities on real-life issues (Lewis, 2004; Müller-Christ et al., 2014; Sahar & Kaunert, 2021). This observation is especially true in Afghanistan where since 2001, the higher education sector has been in a conflict-affected transition working to build community partnerships, the capacity of teachers, and update outdated curricula (Hayward, 2015). The Afghan Ministry of Higher Education has sought to establish local and international partnerships for updating its curricula to reflect the current social, economic, and political needs and opportunities through pedagogical approaches such as outcome-based learning and experiential learning (MoHE, 2012).

Experiential learning involves learning in real-world contexts. Experiential learning is a critical approach for moving students beyond conceptual understandings into building their practical competencies to collaborate on sustainable solutions to complex issues (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Nevertheless, research on pedagogical instruction and curriculum design with a focus on higher education in Afghanistan is relatively limited, especially in the area of experiential learning. This chapter explains the course planning and pedagogical innovation used to design an experiential service learning (SL) course for students in the Department of Tourism at Bamyan University (BU) located in Bamyan, Afghanistan.
The Department of Tourism was established in 2010 to produce graduates capable of researching, planning, and managing a broad array of sustainable tourism ventures and activities to serve the goals of societal enrichment and peacebuilding. The department openly embraced new learning approaches and sought external expertise to help develop their curriculum to align with international standards while maintaining responsiveness to the needs of the local sector. I originally became involved with the Department of Tourism when I was hired as a consultant to conduct a needs assessment on tourism employability skills required by the local tourism sector and then lead the development of a curriculum framework for the department. This experience laid the groundwork for my PhD research and later consultancy work with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). During my consultancy, in addition to regular project work, I designed the first SL course implemented in Afghanistan’s higher education system for tourism students at BU.

This chapter explains the key design elements of the SL model that has been taught at BU since 2015. The focus of the SL course was building tourism students’ key sustainability competencies in inclusive and sustainable tourism development. The course design was a 3-year co-design process and partnership between BU, University of Montana (UM), and UNEP. This process aimed to make education relevant to place by considering the integration of the local tourism stakeholders’ values of inclusivity and sustainable tourism development, which was discussed previously in Chapter 2. The central research question that guided this study was: What are the key design elements of a SL course that is aimed at enabling students to contribute to inclusive and sustainable tourism development? By collaborating and engaging with international partners and locally with teachers, students, and community stakeholders in
Bamyan Province, I showcase an innovative SL course designed to support the development of students’ sustainability competencies.

I begin this chapter with a review of relevant SL theory and sustainability competencies taught in tourism education. I follow that review with a description of the focus and co-design process of the SL course. Then I present the framework and design elements of the SL course curriculum. I conclude with recommendations for educators who wish to integrate SL into higher education programs in Afghanistan.

**Service learning theory and benefits**

SL is a philosophy and practice developed from both the education and environmental movements in the 1960’s and 1970’s. When educators, community organizers, and student activists recognized that formal teaching methods were failing in many countries, education started to take a shift towards practical, student-centered approaches such as SL (Iverson & Espenschied-Reilly, 2010). SL has been adopted in many higher education curriculums worldwide, leading to its implementation in a wide range of disciplines such as business, engineering, sociology, social work, environmental studies, and tourism.

SL is a form of experiential learning that entails planning, action, reflection, and celebration through applied social engagement (Jenkins & Sheehy, 2011; Phillipson-Mower & Adams, 2010). SL pedagogy seeks to benefit the students, teachers, and the recipients of the service (Furco, 1996). The National Service Learning Clearinghouse defines SL as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (Ryan, 2012, p. 3).
SL within the university context can contribute towards the “development of student, faculty, university, and community interactions and capacity” in a transformative manner (Levkoe et al., 2014, p. 80). Hatziconstantis and Kolympari (2016) describe that “learning is no longer limited to the academic content of the course but is influenced by experiential and emotional elements” (p. 183). This experiential design allows teachers, students, and community stakeholders to create their own educational spaces for learning as the teachers take on the role of facilitator and collaborator with the students in setting specific goals. The unscripted approach of community engagement can stimulate the development of students’ emotional intelligence and shape their civic values (Manring, 2012).

Many studies have demonstrated that SL contributes to building the students’ leadership, problem-solving, cultural humility, communication, collaboration, and civic engagement competencies in sustainability (e.g. Birdwell et al., 2013; Levkoe et al., 2014; Trigos-Carrillo et al., 2020). Positive impacts are also displayed in students’ ability to bridge between theory and practice (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; James & Iverson, 2009; Jenkins & Sheehey, 2011). Studies integrating SL into tourism programs have also demonstrated that SL models can support inclusive tourism development through having students work collaboratively with minority, marginalized, and diverse populations to address socio-cultural sustainability issues (Jamal et al., 2011). In conflict-affected contexts, SL was an effective approach to build social relationships founded on cultural humility by having students engage with diverse stakeholders to address common goals (Trigos-Carrillo et al., 2020).

**Sustainability competencies in tourism programs**

The last two decades of tourism scholarship has increased our understanding of the tourism sector’s broad workforce environment. In response, many tourism programs have shifted
from a purely business focus to a holistic focus. As a result, many higher education tourism programs worldwide have sought to integrate sustainability concepts, such as cross-cultural understanding, civic engagement, environmental justice, ethics, and inclusivity within their curriculum (e.g. Jamal et al., 2011; Liburd et al., 2018; Sheldon et al., 2011). These sustainability concepts have substantial utility in conflict-affected contexts for encouraging attitudes and commitment towards processes that can help address the social fragility that can give root to conflict (Sahar & Kaunert, 2021).

Despite the need to build these concepts in tourism programs in conflict-affected societies, western models of sustainability competencies are often implemented without examining the needs of the local tourism sector and prevailing socio-cultural, economic, and political conditions (Lewis, 2004). This is not to imply that western models of teaching sustainability competencies should not be built upon by integrating into the curricula taught in conflict areas, as their models are well synthesized and tested. However, the various conceptualizations of sustainability competencies and pedagogical approaches towards teaching them need to be localized to be reflective and sensitive to the institutional and socio-cultural context of the sector served.

Further illustrating the need for specific strategies to incorporate sustainability competencies into curricula, Wiek et al. (2011) and Wiek et al. (2015) synthesized a coherent set of sustainability competencies from a broad review of literature. Their framework for teaching sustainability competencies has been applied in a variety of education settings including Canada (Rios et al., 2018), Europe (Heiskanen et al., 2016), North America (Remington-Doucette et al., 2013), and Vietnam (Kieu & Singer, 2017) and have the potential to serve as a framework for tourism programs located in conflict-affected countries. However, while these key sustainability
competencies are discussed theoretically, and to a limited extent practically, in sustainability disciplines, research on the ways to integrate them into course designs are scant and has not yet been examined in conflict-affected contexts. The Department of Tourism at BU represented an opportunity for operationalizing and adapting the key sustainability competencies through a SL course in a conflict-affected contexts.

**Focus and time span of the SL design effort**

This particular SL course was designed to develop students’ sustainability competencies important for inclusive and sustainable tourism development. The SL course design was shaped by the broader SL literature, my own visions of SL, and the learning needs expressed by the BU faculty and students as well as local tourism stakeholders. My own visions of SL were influenced by the three years I spent working with the tourism sector in Bamyan as well as my two years of prior experience designing and teaching a SL course for hospitality management students in Thailand. Hence, my academic-community engagement experiences, specifically in formal education environments, strongly impacted the design decisions of this course.

The design process involved three years of effort (2015-2017) during my positions as an international consultant and doctoral student at UM. The first year I developed the main framework and components of the SL course during a curriculum design course at UM. The design of the SL course was in response to the education needs I had identified through my consultancy assisting with the curriculum for the Department of Tourism. During the second year of the design process the course components were translated into Dari language through the support of a field research assistant. With the assistance of the research assistant, we then piloted the SL course with four teachers and 30 students. This pilot year introduced the teachers to student-centered methods and aimed to build the teachers’ agency to adapt the course activities
to their individual strengths. Revisions were then made to the SL course based on feedback from the teachers, students, and research assistant. During the third year the course was reviewed and edited by two faculty advisors from UM and the University of Utah. The course was published by UNEP which involved several rounds of editing and formatting undertaken by the publishing team. The course package was published in English in 2017 (see Appendix B). In all, the publishing team (myself, faculty advisors, BU teachers, and research assistant) put in more than 300 hours to design the course.

**Service learning course design**

In this section I describe the SL course framework to illustrate the key design elements for building students’ sustainability competencies important for inclusive and sustainable tourism development. The section includes a description of the vision, mission, goals, model, and assessment as well as an overview of the activities and learning outcomes of the five-phases of the course. This section also highlights the transition from sustainability competencies to specific learning objectives (Table 3.3). See Appendix B for a full description of the SL course which is also available as a downloadable PDF at https://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/Afghanistan/TEACHPackage_EnvCitizenship_Web.pdf

**Vision, mission, and goals**

As the lead curriculum developer, I defined the course vision, mission, and goals. The vision of the course was to advance innovation in teaching, learning, and action within school systems – based on local contexts and cultures – for students and communities to create and maintain a more sustainable and peaceful environment. The mission was to empower university students to design their own sustainability service project in their local community and develop exceptional leadership, citizenship, and sustainability competencies. The main learning goals of
the course were to have students develop key sustainability competencies as defined by Wiek et al. (2011) and Wiek et al. (2015) presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3. 1 SL course key sustainability competencies. After Wiek et al. (2011, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Students are able to work in teams and with various stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values thinking</td>
<td>Students are able to collectively specify sustainability value differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>among stakeholders and negotiate different courses of action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action-oriented</td>
<td>Students are able to collectively develop plans, mobilize resources,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>carry-out roles and responsibilities, and implement interventions to reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sustainability goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems thinking</td>
<td>Students are able to analyze interconnections across different domains and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scales to solve sustainability problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated problem-solving</td>
<td>Students able to analyze the complexity of sustainability problems and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>develop viable solutions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching philosophy**

As a philosophy, the SL course encouraged experimental learning, critical theory, and multiculturalism by which teachers, students, and the community created their own educational spaces for learning:

1. *Experimental*: Students gain career skills, processes of project planning and implementation, and environmental citizenship through real life experiences.

2. *Critical theory*: Teachers provide forums for student reflective learning while students mediate their own processes for learning.

3. *Multiculturalism*: The curriculum fosters equal participation across gender and multicultural environments while engaging students in diverse social environments in their communities. The curriculum is also adaptable to local needs and promotes sensitivity to cultures and different beliefs.
Five-phase interdisciplinary model

The SL course was designed as an interdisciplinary curriculum that empowers students to develop the key sustainability competencies through a 5-phase curriculum model (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Description of the 5-stage curriculum model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Exploration of ethics and values</td>
<td>Students explore their sense of place and how sense of place influences community members’ social and environmental ethical decisions in Bamyan.</td>
<td>3 class sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sustainability inquiry</td>
<td>Students select a tourism-focused sustainability issue that they want to improve and research the issues in their community.</td>
<td>3 weeks, 4-5 class sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Project planning</td>
<td>Students develop an action plan to improve the tourism-focused sustainability issue in their community.</td>
<td>3 weeks, 4-5 class sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Project implementation</td>
<td>Students engage community stakeholders in implementing their action plan.</td>
<td>2 weeks, no class sessions, students are actively engaged in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reflection and celebration</td>
<td>Students, teachers, and community stakeholders reflect and celebrate the outcomes of the project.</td>
<td>3 hours, awards ceremony at the end of the course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the approach of Wiek et al. (2015), a description of the course learning objectives and activities for the five phases of the SL course and their alignment with the sustainability competencies are described below. These phases are described in detail to explore how the technical aspects of the course design transitions to building students’ sustainability competences (see Table 3.3).

Phase 1: Exploration of ethics and values
The course’s first phase was designed to have students develop values thinking and collaboration competencies through exploring their sense of place, the ethical dilemmas of environmental issues in their community, and multiculturalism. The phase included three activities facilitated in 60 to 90-minute class sessions. The learning objective of Activity 1 was for students to explore their sense of place and compare their place meanings to how other students in the class identify to a place in their community [Values Thinking]. Activity 1 was facilitated by displaying eight place meanings around the room for students to read. Students were asked to stand by the place meaning that meant the most to them. Next the students discussed with their classmates who chose the same place meaning about why the place meaning was important to them. After the discussion, a representative from each group provided a summary to the class about why their group members choose that place meaning. Lastly, the instructor facilitated a class discussion by having students share their personal knowledge and life experiences that influence their place meanings and theorize how different members in their society might form a different place meaning, such as a farmer, politician, or religious leader [Value Thinking: identify value differences]. The objective of Activity 2 was for students to debate different social and environmental ethical decisions that are currently taking place in their community [Values Thinking/Collaboration]. Students worked in their assigned groups to create a poster illustrating an ethical dilemma in their community that addresses both sides of the argument. In addition to these steps, students were introduced to tips for providing an effective oral presentation [Collaboration: communication skills]. Student groups had to present their posters to the class and practice their oral communication skills. Activity 3 was designed to have students gain a better understanding of multiculturalism and diversity across societies, groups, and individuals through discussions with a guest speaker from their community [Values
Thinking: respecting diversity]. Students were required to prepare questions prior to the guest speaker’s session so that the teacher could facilitate an active class discussion.

*Phase 2: Sustainability inquiry*

The goal of the sustainability inquiry phase was to build students’ systems thinking, integrated problem-solving, and collaboration competencies through selecting and researching a tourism-related sustainability issue in their community. The phase included three activities facilitated over the course of four weeks. Activity 4 and 5 were facilitated in two class sessions and set the groundwork for student groups to select the issue for their SL project [Action-Oriented: collectively decide on an issue to investigate] with an understanding of the complexity of the problem [Integrated Problem-Solving]. The learning objective for Activity 4 was for the students to map the complexity of tourism sustainability issues in their community [Systems Thinking]. To facilitate this activity students had to bring in photos of places in their community that represented the landscape, infrastructure, cultural history, livelihoods, tourism, and people. In pairs, students identified the social, economic, environmental, and governance sustainability factors related to their photos. Then as a class, on large sheets of flip chart paper, students had to label and draw connections between their sustainability factors. The learning objective for Activity 5 was for student groups to discuss sustainability issues in their community according to stakeholders’ positions, beliefs, and values using the Issue Analysis Technique [Values Thinking]. Students had to work in their groups and briefly present their issue analysis examples to the class [Collaboration]. With guidance from the teacher, the student groups had to select the issue they wanted to address based on time, resources, and feasibility. Once student groups selected their issue, the objective of Activity 6 was for student groups to research the current community needs, positions, and interests around their issue. The teacher had to introduce
students to qualitative research methods and ethics through short lectures [Values Thinking]. Additional class time was provided for students to prepare and present their research questions and instruments for peer feedback [Systems Thinking/Collaboration]. After sufficient preparation student groups collected their data in the community [Collaboration: interviewing stakeholders] and analyze the results [Systems Thinking/Integrated Problem-Solving]. To aid student groups in critically thinking about how their findings would help them make sound decisions regarding solutions to their issue, each student group had to develop a short report or presentation to present to the class for peer feedback [Systems Thinking/Integrated Problem Solving].

Phase 3: Project planning

The goal of the project planning phase was to build students’ action-oriented, collaboration, and integrated problem-solving competencies through having the student groups develop a proposal (action plan) to improve their selected sustainability issue related to sustainable tourism development. The proposal had to comprise of their solution to their issue based on research findings; project-specific goals and objectives; details of the stakeholders involved and their roles; all steps required to implement the project; team members’ responsibilities; resources needed; budget estimates; potential risks; and the methodology by which they would evaluate the impact of their project. The timeframe for completing the project planning phase was three weeks. The curriculum model included three activities to guide students on developing their proposals. In Activity 7, the student groups were presented with a proposal template and the teacher provided a short lecture on the components of a proposal. Students were provided class time to work in their groups to brainstorm ideas, ask questions from the teacher, and collectively work on filling out the sections of their proposal template [Action-Oriented/Collaboration: co-create a plan]. In Activity 8, an expert from the community
was invited to guide students on developing a media strategy for raising awareness about their project as part of their proposal. Similarly, in Activity 9, an expert was invited to further guide students on developing their budget and risk management sections of their proposal [Action-Oriented/Collaboration: determine project feasibility based on budget and identify risk factors that affect success or failure]. During these three weeks additional class time was provided, at the teacher’s discretion, for the student groups to present their progress and receive feedback on refining their action plans [Action-Oriented: define all steps of building transition strategies, strategic thinking in sustainability problem solving].

**Phase 4: Community engagement**

In the community engagement phase the main goal was to have students hone their action-oriented and collaboration competencies through collectively preparing and implementing their action plan in the community. The timeline for preparing and implementing their action plans was three weeks. In Activity 10, the main objective was for students to be confidently prepared to deliver their individual and group assigned tasks for their project implementation activities [Action-Oriented/Collaboration]. The teacher was to present planning tools, such as a project preparation checklist and event agenda template, to assist the student groups in preparing their implementation activities. Students had to clearly describe their tasks and responsibilities for implementing their action plan through a group presentation with the class [Action Oriented/Collaboration: foster team success by building upon team members’ strengths]. Next the students were to prepare all project materials, mobilize resources, make logistical arrangements, coordinate with stakeholders, and perform any additional steps as indicated in their action plan [Action-oriented/Collaboration: coordinate work across multiple teams working in concert of complex sustainability problem-solving activities and conduct stakeholder
engagement in complex settings that require negotiation]. Ultimately, it was intended that the preparation activity would build the students’ confidence in performing their individual and group assigned tasks during their project implementation.

Activity 11 was designed to be entirely student-driven as the student groups implemented their action plan in the community and set their own objectives/goals [Action-Oriented/Collaboration: coordinate work across multiple teams working in concert on sustainability problem-solving activities]. Students were to serve a diversity of roles in implementing their project, including presenting, receiving stakeholders according to cultural norms, documenting activities, etc. [Action-Oriented: performing specific interventions].

**Phase 5: Reflection and celebration**

The goal of last phase of SL model was to have the teachers, students, and community stakeholders reflect and celebrate the course outcomes. In Activity 12, the teacher organized an awards ceremony for the students, inviting community stakeholders and the students’ family members. The awards ceremony included speeches and active discussions to highlight the students’ individual and team achievements, acknowledge the participation from the community, and discuss the impacts of the program. Furthermore, the award ceremony was an opportunity for the students to conduct a self-assessment as well as receive feedback from the community stakeholders about their performance and outcomes of their project. Sharing of experiences and competencies gained from this program together with the community allowed students, teachers, and family members to see the bigger picture [Collaboration/Values thinking/Action-Oriented/Systems thinking/Integrate Problem-Solving].
Table 3. Phases of the SL model: alignment of the activities with objectives and sustainability competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Goals: Sustainability Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. **Exploration of ethics and values** | Activity 1: Sense of Place & Human Identity | - Students identify their own place attachment and meaning to the world around them through group discussions.  
- Students explore how their place attachment and meaning are influenced by experiences, education, culture, and society through describing key influences.  
- Students discuss how other members of their society might define their sense of place differently and how this influences the impact they have on their environment. | Collaboration Values Thinking  
Systems Thinking |
|                               | Activity 2: Social & Environmental Welfare | - Students debate different social and environmental ethical decisions that have taken place in their community through poster presentations.  
- Students recognize elements that make a good oral presentation by receiving feedback from the teacher(s) and students on the effectiveness of their poster presentations. | Collaboration Values Thinking |
|                               | Activity 3: Cultural Perspectives & Values | - Students gain a better understanding of multiculturalism and diversity across societies, groups, and individuals through discussions with a guest speaker. | Values Thinking |
| 2. **Sustainability Inquiry**  | Activity 4: Factors Affecting Environmental Change | - Students discuss the environmental, social, economic, and governance changes that have occurred in their community over the past 20 years through analyzing photos.  
- Students recognize the governance, economic, and social forces that effect their local environment through a class mapping exercise.  
- Students identify a web of sustainability issues in their community and their relationship to one another through class discussions. | Systems Thinking |
|                               | Activity 5: Issue Analysis | - Students analyze stakeholder positions, beliefs, and values around an issue they are interested in solving through using the Issue Analysis Technique.  
- Students demonstrate group decision making skills by deciding an environmental issue to investigate. | Collaboration Values Thinking  
Systems Thinking |
<p>|                               | Activity 6: Scientific and | - Students develop research questions to guide their environmental investigation through | Collaboration Integrated-Problem |
|                               | Integrated-Problem          |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                    |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Inquiry</th>
<th>Group and class discussions.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students work as a team and designate different leadership responsibilities during their research design, collection, and analysis.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students develop a structured and feasible research plan with interview protocols using qualitative and/or quantitative research methods.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students collect data using observation, surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, secondary data collection, or a combination of these methods.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Students interpret data and draw conclusions on solutions to their issue.</td>
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### 3. Project Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 7: Action Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students develop an action plan indicating the steps they will take to improve an environmental issue in their community through student-led group activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students present their action plan to the project committee for feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students address all the important questions for proceeding with citizen action provided in the student handout.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Activity 8: Media &amp; Communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students develop media literacy skills through practical exercises with a media expert.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students learn about the different types of media they can use to raise awareness about their project such as through social media, film, print, story boards, news, and radio from the media expert.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students advise each other on how to use media as part of their action plan through class discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Activity 9: Project Budgeting &amp; Risk Management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students create a project budget through consultations with a finance expert.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students identify project risks, their impact on the project, and risk reduction actions through creating a risk reduction log frame.</td>
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### 4. Community Engagement

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Activity 10: Project Preparation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students clearly describe their tasks and responsibilities for implementing their action plan through student driven planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students prepare all project materials, logistical arrangements, and additional steps as indicated in their action plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are confident to deliver their individual and group assigned tasks.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity 11:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students effectively implement their project</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaboration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action-Oriented Integrated-Problem Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action-Oriented</td>
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<td>Action-Oriented</td>
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</tbody>
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Assessment

Summative and formative assessments were designed to evaluate students’ achievement of the learning objectives and sustainability competencies gained. Summative assessments included participation, student assignments, mid-term evaluation, and final examination in accordance with the MoHE’s Guidelines for Curriculum Review and Development (MoHE, 2012). Figure 3.1 depicts the description of the summative assessments as outlined in the course curriculum.
Formative assessments were designed to identify how learning and teaching strategies could be improved during the course. Formative assessments were also used to help teachers determine if extra time should be set aside for students to develop foundational skills and attitudes. Formative assessments included observation, focus group discussions, class discussions, and student presentations. In addition, Phase 5, Reflection and Celebration, encouraged stakeholders from across the educational community (teachers, students, community stakeholders, and students’ family members) to reflect on the outcomes of the learning experience.

**Concluding remarks and recommendations**

This chapter presents the first SL course designed and operationalized in higher education in Afghanistan. Specifically, I presented the design elements of a SL course framed around five sustainability competencies important for inclusive and sustainable tourism development. The course has seen significant success in shifting from a formal didactic learning environment to a holistic, student centered learning environment. Administrators, faculty, students, and

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**Figure 3. 1 Service learning assessment described in course curriculum**

1. Participation 10%: Teachers are encouraged to evaluate students based on their participation in class discussions, pre- and post-test, group activities, and attendance.
2. Student assignments 10%: Student handouts are provided as in class or take home assignments.
3. Mid-term 20%: Students are assessed based on their group action plans for implementing their project. An assessment rubric is provided in the teaching materials to guide group evaluation.
4. Final exam 60%: The learning objectives provided in the units should guide the final assessment. Students will be assessed in two parts: 30% for final essay and 30% for implementation of their final project. It is up to the teachers to assess the students based on their final project according to their preferred testing methods. A sample assessment rubric is provided for evaluating final essays.
community partners have recognized the value of this course in heightening students personal understanding and preparing them for entry into the work environment. Furthermore, the course has demonstrated one way in which teaching and learning can extend beyond the classroom and build students’ competencies for bringing change to their communities. For educators interested in integrating SL into higher education programs in Afghanistan, here I provide four key insights and recommendations for designing, implementing, and evaluating a SL course.

First, the co-design process was instrumental for emerging expertise across international and local levels and informing different approaches for designing the course. The course design was guided by internationally recognized SL frameworks but adapted to the teaching and learning needs of the students, institutional norms, and the needs of tourism sector in Bamyan. The co-design process met the MoHE goals for updating outdated curricula in line with international standards and local needs.

Second, developing a strategy for building the teachers’ capacity to teach the new pedagogy was critical to the success of the program. The course design required teachers to drastically change their instruction approach from formal teaching to active and student-centered teaching. A three-year collaborative immersion approach was used to have the teachers observe my classroom instruction and teach the course with my support and guidance. The collaborative immersion approach also aimed to promote the teachers’ sense of agency to adapt activities based on their individual strengths and explore what new forms of instructional methods were possible for informing the curriculum design.

Third, I recommend that university programs offer opportunities for students to build their reflective writing skills prior to taking a SL course. Reflective assessment is a powerful tool in SL programs (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). In our experience, most of the students
communicated well with oral forms of reflection but performed poorly with reflective essays, writing short and vague responses. We found that the reflective essays did not adequately measure students’ sustainability competencies gained. Educators interested in adopting alternative forms of assessment need to consider students’ foundational skills to ensure that the assessment design will reflect students’ achievement of the learning outcomes.

Finally, the co-design process was critical to creating a new vision for tourism education at BU founded on student-centered, real-life, and community engaged teaching and learning. While university programs in Afghanistan may share similar visions, other educators interested in infusing SL into their programs should consider adapting this SL model with respect to their university’s mission, program goals, socio-cultural context, and local sector served. Educators are encouraged to explore the SL model and the subsequent chapters in this dissertation assessing the impacts of the SL course.
References


CHAPTER 4

Impacts of Service Learning on Tourism Students’ Sustainability Competencies in Conflict-affected Bamyan, Afghanistan

Abstract

This chapter investigates the impacts of service learning (SL) on teaching sustainability competencies in an undergraduate tourism program at Bamyan University, Afghanistan. We report on tourism students’ experiences in the SL course which taught five key sustainability competencies (collaboration, values thinking, action-oriented, systems thinking, and integrated problem solving). We assessed students’ perceptions of their sustainability competencies gained during the implementation of the course in 2016 and 2017 through focus groups and reflective essays. The results demonstrate how the SL experience led students to self-discovery and strong conceptualizations of sustainability and built students’ social relationships with community stakeholders. Our analysis provides valuable information for developing effective tourism education programs, relationships of trust between students and community stakeholders, and the empowerment of students to contribute to local solutions which serve a role in stabilization efforts in conflict-affected contexts.

Introduction

The need for teaching sustainability within tourism-focused higher education programs has prompted a growing body of research on the topic (Boley, 2011; Boyle, 2017; Cotterell et al., 2019; Deale et al., 2009; Zizka & Varga, 2020). Tourism education scholars have observed that merely preparing students with employability skills is inadequate to address the realities and sustainability dilemmas of an increasingly dynamic world of work (Ali et al., 2014; Wilson &
von der Heidt, 2013). Tourism graduates must also be prepared to navigate the multi-faceted nature of inequality, marginalization, climate change, environmental degradation, war and conflict, and injustice (Boley, 2011; Guasca et al., 2020; Jamal et al., 2011). Increasingly, tourism educators are recognizing the utility of preparing students to address these issues through enriching students’ sustainability concepts and competencies (Deale, 2009). Previous research suggests that teaching sustainability in tourism curricula requires engaging students in real-world settings through a holistic and interdisciplinary approach (Jennings et al., 2015).

Despite the emerging scholarship that points to the need to include sustainability in tourism education, only a small number of studies investigate pedagogical approaches for teaching sustainability (e.g. Jamal et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2015). Additionally, few studies investigate approaches to teaching sustainability in tourism programs in conflict-affected contexts. To address this gap, this chapter reports on a holistic service learning approach to teach sustainability competencies in a newly launched tourism higher education program in Afghanistan.

Higher education programs in conflict-affected contexts such as Afghanistan face numerous barriers to designing and implementing curricula. For the purposes of this chapter, conflict-affected contexts draw upon the definition of places that have experienced prolonged violence (World Bank, 2020). Nation-states that are in a conflict-affected stage struggle to provide rule of law, meet economic and social needs, provide basic services (such as health care, clean water, education), and maintain security internally or within their borders (Hayward, 2015). In many cases, the basic foundations of trust and collaboration need time to be repaired and re-established in a conflict-affected society (Trigos-Carrillo et al., 2020). Most higher education programs in war-torn environments seeking to (re)establish social relations and
provide quality higher education to meet the many needs of society face many obstacles to their success (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014). Other challenges include lack of trained instructors and outdated curricula which further impede the ability of higher education programs to be attuned to the current needs of society (Hayward, 2015). Curriculum pedagogy is often focused on reductionistic teaching methods that rely on rote learning rather than reflective, active, and student-centered learning. Formal educational learning environments offered in conflict-affected societies are highly criticized as being dislocated from local context, including a lack of emphasis on teaching students practical competencies needed to stabilize, (re)build, and sustain societies (Sahar & Kaunert, 2021). These limitations faced by higher education institutions in fragile social environments point to the need for research on developing innovative pedagogy to teach sustainability in tourism programs appropriate to the institutional and socio-cultural realities.

Service learning (SL) is one pedagogical approach which aligns well with sustainability outcomes in conflict-affected contexts. In SL, equal focus is on service and learning, providing benefits to both the students and the community stakeholders involved (Furco, 1996). Dull (2009), Eberly and Gal (2007), and Trigos-Carrillo et al. (2020) demonstrated the benefits that SL can have in fostering social change in students for meeting the many needs of society in post-conflict settings. Trigos-Carrillo et al. (2020) also recognized the potential for SL to foster social relationships founded on cultural humility by engaging diverse stakeholders to address common goals. Although it has not been directly studied in conflict-affected contexts, the student-centered and holistic approach of SL could guide students and community stakeholders to an understanding and working interpretation of sustainability. SL offers potential utility where the
formal teaching and learning practices often fall short of teaching students strong conceptualizations of sustainability to address conflict-impacted societal needs.

This case study focuses on a SL course aimed at teaching sustainability competencies in a tourism undergraduate program at Bamyan University (BU) in Bamyan, Afghanistan. The design of the course adapted a set of sustainability competencies articulated by Wiek et al. (2011) and Wiek et al. (2015). These competencies are emphasized in the literature by sustainability education scholars, but their relevance have been recognized by other fields, including tourism education. The five key sustainability competencies evaluated in this course included: collaboration, values thinking, action-oriented, systems thinking, and the meta-competency, integrated problem-solving. Here we report on students’ perceptions of their sustainability competencies learned during the SL course. By providing a curriculum model for SL that is culturally suitable and aligns with the unique challenges, the results aim to inform future efforts in teaching sustainability in tourism-focused higher education programs in Afghanistan and other countries experiencing prolonged instability.

Beginning with the theoretical framework, we cover conceptualizations of sustainability in tourism education. We proceed with the site selection of Bamyan, Afghanistan, followed by a brief description of the SL course, and the methods used to analyze students’ perceptions of their sustainability competencies gained during the course. Next, we turn to a discussion of the results, with an emphasis on students’ perceptions of skills and behaviors learned in relation to the key sustainability competencies. The last section discusses the implications of a SL model for teaching sustainability competencies in a conflict-affected context and provides recommendations for future research.
Literature review

Sustainability in tourism education: Towards a conceptual framework

An important starting point for this study is building an understanding of how sustainability has been conceptualized in tourism education. As Cotterell et al. (2019) note, tourism course designs are often based on weak conceptualizations of sustainability that lack holistic and systems thinking. Weaknesses in the conceptualization of sustainability are rooted, in part, in an ongoing debate surrounding the definition of sustainability. The landmark Brundtland Commission report published in 1987 is widely cited as defining sustainability as, “[meeting] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 8). The vagueness of this well-known definition leaves sustainability as a concept open to diverse interpretation in its implementation, which in some cases has led to misuse of the environment for economic growth (Ott et al., 2011).

In tourism education a common conceptual framework of sustainability thinking has focused on having students understand the relationship among the social, economic, and environmental spheres of the triple bottom line. The triple bottom line conceptualization is strongly grounded in western thinking and has been criticized for not being holistic and for emphasizing economic outcomes (Cotterell et al., 2019). In contrast, stronger conceptualizations of sustainability in tourism education emphasize a more holistic approach to understanding socio-cultural dimensions, ethics, environmental justice, and community needs (Cotterell et al., 2019). These variations in what constitutes sustainability has led some tourism educators to conclude that sustainability concepts are themselves forever evolving and adapting to site and regionally specific conditions (Deale et al., 2009). Thus, many in higher education identify sustainability’s vagueness as an actual advantage that allows diverse stakeholders to “tailor the
generic definition to achieve concrete goals in their unique situation” (Dale & Newman, 2005, p. 354).

Afghanistan, as a conflict-affected context, requires preparing instructors, students, and communities to define sustainability according to their own needs and societal conditions. However, considering the numerous higher education challenges posed by a fragile social environment, the process of integrating sustainability competencies into tourism programs is unclear, as compared to programs that may have a sustainability education foundation already. A critical question is how to begin the process of weaving sustainability into tourism programs in conflict-affected contexts? Studies in non-conflict states have suggested that integrating sustainability across the curriculum in tourism programs is most effective (Boley, 2011). However, in the case of conflict-affected states, starting at the curriculum level may not be feasible considering the various financial, pedagogical, and social constraints that require precautions, planning, and testing. Other studies on tourism higher education have suggested offering specific classes on sustainability which utilize SL (Jamal et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2011; Monk et al., 2007). SL provides students with hands on experiences in the settings they operate in and the opportunity to reflect on their experiences to gain a more holistic perspective of sustainability. This approach provides an alternative to teaching sustainability in conflict-affected contexts.

**Methods and procedures**

**Site selection**

Since the late 1970s, Afghanistan has experienced foreign invasion, prolonged instability, and civil wars (Barfield, 2010). Despite ongoing instability and violence in much of the country, residents in Bamyan Province³, located in the central highlands of Afghanistan, have been
working to rebuild vital infrastructure and economic sectors including the tourism industry. Bamyan offers unique tourism opportunities structured around the diverse high alpine landscape, ethnic diversity, and cultural heritage dating back to the Buddhist era (1st to 13th century A.D.). The Province is home to inspiring Buddhist and Islamic archaeological sites, Band-e-Amir National Park, and other natural and cultural assets (for background please see for example Dupree (1967) and Bourrouilh-Le Jan et al. (2007)). In recent years a number of local and international efforts have tried to develop the tourism in Bamyan centered around its history and geographic features. However, the development of the tourism sector is hindered by persisting weak state-society relations, deep ethnic and social divisions, crippled infrastructure, and a lack of trained tourism professionals with practical skills to build and sustain the sector.

To address some of these challenges and opportunities to build leadership within the tourism sector, the Department of Tourism was established at BU in 2010. The department was established to play a critical role in producing graduates capable of researching, planning, and managing a broad array of tourism ventures and activities to enrich society. Housed within the sociology faculty, the Department of Tourism offers the only 4-year Bachelors of Science degree in tourism studies in the country, graduating approximately 50-60 students a year. Given that tourism is a new field of study in Afghanistan and has no history of being taught locally, the department sought international expertise to help develop curriculum that would align with international standards and be responsive to the needs of the sector. The process of developing the curriculum included the introduction of innovative pedagogical approaches to balance theory with practice as well as realistic considerations of the department’s lack of qualified instructors and financial constraints. Further, BU’s intention was to promote community acceptance of, and
benefit from, tourism activities and local capacities to plan and manage a broad array of potential tourism ventures in the region.

**The case study: Service learning course design at Bamyan University**

The “Environmental Citizenship through Applied Community Service Learning” course, is the focus of this case study. The course was designed as a mandatory, 3-credit, capstone course for students in their third year of study. Multiculturalism and social constructivism were selected as the teaching philosophies for informing the design of the SL course. The course followed a 5-phase interdisciplinary curriculum model (Table 4.1).

4.1 Five phases of the service learning course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exploration of ethics and values</td>
<td>Students explore their sense of place and how sense of place influences community members’ social and environmental ethical decisions in Bamyan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability inquiry</td>
<td>Student groups select a tourism-focused sustainability issue that they want to improve and research the issues in their community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project planning</td>
<td>Student groups develop an action plan (proposal) to improve the tourism-focused sustainability issue in their community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community engagement</td>
<td>Student groups engage community stakeholders in implementing their action plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection and celebration</td>
<td>Students, teachers, and community stakeholders reflect and celebrate the outcomes of the project.</td>
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The main goal of the course was to have students develop key sustainability competencies in collaboration, values thinking, action-oriented, systems thinking, and integrated problem-solving that lead towards sustainable tourism planning and management. To achieve this goal, we used a project-oriented pedagogy involving students working in teams of 12-15 students to research, design, and implement their own tourism-focused sustainability project in their community. Each student had to select a leadership role within their group. Leadership roles included a team leader (or rais, meaning “boss” in Persian), team leader assistant, community liaison, finance manager, risk manager, media coordinator, and portfolio coordinator. The leadership roles were designed to ensure that each student was actively engaged and taught how to perform different functional tasks for achieving their common project goals and developing their sustainability competencies (Please see Franklin and Mosavi (2017) for a full description of the course).

**Data collection and analysis**

The SL course was assessed in the fall semester of 2016 and 2017 with third year students. A total of 56 students participated in the course in 2016 and 55 students participated in 2017. The approach to assessing students’ perceptions of their sustainability competencies was implemented through focus groups and reflective essays facilitated after Phase 4 of the SL course.

Students were asked questions using prompts in their focus groups and reflective essays about their SL experience regarding the skills and attitudes they gained during the course. The questions were guided by Seidel and Blyth’s (1996) reflective process. Two focus group sessions were held for each student group. Owing to existing gender norms, women and men were broken out into their own gender-specific groups, totalling eight focus groups each year. The focus groups lasted approximately 40 to 70 minutes. The focus groups were conducted in Hazaragi and
transcribed verbatim into English. The focus group interview data and reflective essays were translated by Hazaragi-speaking research assistants from Bamyan Province. Acknowledging the imperfect nature of translating languages, our research team worked to ensure accuracy in grammatical structure and semantics of the translation. The process of translation involved having three of the native English-speaking team members review the translations and share recommendations on modifications to correct errors in typing, omission, or meaning. The next step in translation involved discussions with a Hazaragi translator to determine if the modifications were effective and accurate.

The data was analyzed in NVivo. Themes used to analyze the data were the five sustainability competencies described above: collaboration, values thinking, action-oriented, systems thinking, and integrated problem-solving. The themes were then broken down into emerging sub-themes of the groups of skills and attitudes students gained. Similar sub-themes were found across both years of the study. In 2017, the data was more robust and descriptive than the data from 2016. Frequency data, the percent of students who mentioned they gained skills or attitudes related to each competency theme, was added to the analysis for 2017.

**Students’ perceptions of sustainability competencies gained**

The following sections are structured according to the four sustainability competencies, collaboration, values thinking, action-oriented, systems thinking as well as the meta-competency, integrated problem-solving. The first four sections begin by outlining the competency themes and the main groups of skills and attitudes identified from students’ reflective accounts (also summarized in Table 4.2). The frequency data presented is from the second year of the study in 2017. This is followed by a descriptive account of the students’ perception of their groups of skills and attitudes learned demonstrated through selected quotes from the focus groups and
reflective essays during both years of the study. Each section presents the instructional design of the course that the students attributed to building their sustainability competence. The fifth section, integrated problem-solving, describes how this meta-competency was connected to the groups of skills and attitudes students learned in the previous competencies.

**Collaboration competence**

Collaboration competence requires that students are able to successfully work in teams and with various stakeholders. According to students’ perceptions of their skills and attitudes learned, two main competency themes were linked to collaboration: working as a team and collaborating with community stakeholders.\(^\text{7}\)

The first theme – working as a team – was expressed by 65 percent of the participating students in 2017. The focus group and reflective essay data exposed how students’ acquisition of learning how to work in a team developed through the first four phases of the course. Analysis of students’ responses revealed four main groups of skills and attitudes necessary for contributing productively to team success: 1) coordinating team activities and tasks, 2) providing task assistance, 3) supporting equal voice, and 4) respecting each other (see Table 4.2).

First, many students identified coordinating team activities and tasks as significant predictors of successful teamwork. Some students expressed challenges with coordinating among their group members whereas others mentioned positive team dynamics when it came to coordination. Students who appraised their team for having good coordination skills alluded to the importance of having regular team meetings. For example, “the good coordination which was among the members of this group resulted in our problems being solved and also sessions were organized to solve the problems. In these meetings, discussions focused on solutions.” Students who encountered problematic group dynamics provided more descriptive accounts of the
importance of team coordination. For example, a focus group discussion with the male team members of a student group recounted what they learned from a challenging group situation in which they were dissatisfied with the lack of coordination and communication undertaken by their team leader.

Student A: First, we selected handicrafts as our project, and later on we heard from some [other] students. . . that our rais selected the Peace Park as our project without our agreement. . . He did [these] activities with his personal friends.

Student B: At this time we can say that we learned there should be good coordination in a project between group members. On the day of selecting the project . . . the rais with his assistant went to other districts [in Bamyan]. . . I mean the more we are coordinated the more we get a positive result.

Despite the uneven group dynamics, the students’ observations were an integral part of their learning process for determining the characteristics that lead to successful team coordination (clear communication, commitment to team members, and actively present). Identifying the importance of coordination allowed them to quickly resolve team conflicts later in the course.

Secondly, students also reported that providing task assistance was important for team success. Students provided examples of how they worked as a team to carry out their individual and small group tasks as well as help one another as they worked towards their common goals. For example, one student whose leadership role was managing the team budget, explained the interdependent nature of how their group functioned:

I went to take the price of materials. . . and my group members went with me too. I mean we did most of our work in a group, it was not like the rais was limited to his position and he didn’t help others.

Thirdly, students expressed supporting equal voice was an important value for team functioning. Many students mentioned that they created an open environment where all group members were encouraged to share their ideas during group meetings. For example, a student reflected, “one other benefit that I liked is that the 13 or 14 people, or we can say 13 or 14
thoughts, came together to design a plan and proceed with that.” Students also realized that having the contributions from all group members strengthened their project outcomes, as this group member demonstrated in their plan to design and install information signs for tourists at cultural heritage sites: “It should be designed in a way that all group members come together and share their ideas and from 10 ideas they should select two of them.”

Lastly, students identified respecting each other as an important value for team success as the students’ gained exposure to working in groups for the first time in their university classroom experience. Many students used words such as respect, unity, sincerity, and mutual understanding to describe supportive characteristics important for teamwork. For example, one student celebrated the fact that his team was successful because they learned to accept each other and work respectfully:

Before we worked in a team, we knew each other in the classroom, but we did not have much more. . . Then, with the team implementation of this project, I figured out how well we can do groupwork and how much groupwork and accepting each other can be effective. In addition to other skills, we learned how to communicate, how to respect, how to manage, [and] how to work together.

In addition to learning how to work as a team, the second theme – collaborating with community stakeholders – was mentioned by 80 percent of the students. The students attributed two phases of the course to teaching them practical skills for collaborating with the community. In the sustainability inquiry phase students had to interview stakeholders to research their selected tourism sustainability issue in their community. In the community engagement phase students had to prepare and implement their project with stakeholders. Analysis of students’ responses from their focus groups and reflective essays revealed two interrelated groups of communication skills and attitudes important for stakeholder collaboration outcomes: 1)
communicating intent and building rapport, and 2) communicating in a culturally respectful manner (see Table 4.2).

First, students expressed that communicating the intent of their research and project goals to their stakeholders was a skill that they needed to learn to gain stakeholders’ participation. During the sustainability inquiry phase many students had difficulty gaining the stakeholders’ trust needed to participate in their research interviews. For example, one student explained:

When we were going to the field to ask questions of the local people . . . they treated us poorly [and told us] that you are lying, you are a spy, and [you] don’t have any other purpose. Finally, we let them know through the religious leaders [and] elders of the village that our purpose was not espionage and we were there just for guiding and asking them.

During the community engagement phase, students expressed they had to strategize ways to build rapport with their stakeholders in order to gain their trust and collaboration in their project implementation activities. One student explained how he had to contact their stakeholders several times:

On the first day when we went to implement the project . . . they didn’t want to allow us. ‘Where are you from? What are you? What for?’ . . . But it became better on the second day and also on the third day. We understood that they got more familiar with us.

Students voiced that it was only through many failed attempts and reconvening in their groups to reflect on their experiences that they learned how to formulate a planned approach to gaining their stakeholders’ trust and participation. Clearly communicating their research intent, communicating through the appropriate channels, and building rapport was critical to gaining collaboration from stakeholders.

Thirdly, students repeatedly voiced that they had to learn how to communicate in a culturally respectful manner to gain their stakeholders’ trust and collaboration. One student
described the importance of respect for culture this way: “[To] achieve the goal we have and be respectful of the beliefs and customs of people. . . and listen to the circumstances of answers we hear.” Another student explained how to approach communicating in a culturally respectful manner to build rapport and gain their stakeholders’ trust and participation:

...to enter a traditional society. . .[one] must act carefully. . . For example, the clothes we wear among ourselves are different from what they wear there. The method of behavior that we have with each other is also different, like when we make jokes. How to express ourselves and our method of talking can finally change their acceptance towards us.

**Values thinking competence**

Students capable of values thinking are able to collectively specify sustainability value differences among stakeholders and negotiate different courses of action. The focus group and reflective essay data revealed that 71 percent of students demonstrated values thinking competence. During the first phase of the course students explored their own values and learned to respect and empathize with their academic peers and instructors. These were fundamental steps in the process to acquire more advanced values thinking learning outcomes in the later phases of the course. Data analysis revealed four groups of learned skills and attitudes related to values thinking: 1) identifying value differences among stakeholders, 2) applying sustainability concepts of equality and cultural humility, 3) negotiating interactions with, and educating/informing stakeholders based on ethical claims, and 4) developing a sense of connection and social responsibility to the community (see Table 4.2).

First, many students expressed how interesting it was to learn about their stakeholders’ sustainability values and positions during the sustainability inquiry phase. For example, a male student whose project activity involved designing and installing information signs for tourists to
help protect cultural heritage sites, explained the importance of understanding stakeholders’ views:

I liked this part of the research because. . . we could establish communication with local people [and] learned the method of behavior with local people. In this way we could know their view about installation of the [information] signs.

Following the sustainability inquiry phase, students described how identifying stakeholders’ values and positions were crucial for their action plan. For example, one student mentioned: “at first we must recognize the relevant institutes and ask their view about improving the implementation of our project.” Another elaborated: “[we learned] how to solve the problems that we faced during the project and established good relations with people; here we had to respect the views, patterns, social relations that we must give importance too.” The process of building relationships allowed students to dive deeper into understanding their stakeholders’ values. In the following example, a student explained the benefits to understanding their stakeholders’ values:

. . . I saw different types of people and different perspectives and each of them had a special feature. . . And I made strong relationships and friendships with all those who came my way and it was very enjoyable for me. This is very useful for others because . . . [our group’s] concepts were presented correctly [according to our stakeholders’ values] and increased our power of speech.

Secondly, applying sustainability concepts of equality and cultural humility were also evident in students’ description of their skills and attitudes learned during the course. Student responses coded to this subtheme were similarly coded to collaboration competence (e.g. respecting each other; communicating in a culturally respectful manner). Students used phrases and words such as establishing national unity, integrity between people, mutual acceptance, and cultural behavior with people to demonstrate their learned values of equality and cultural humility. For example, a student concluded: “In this semester we understood that every
community has its own culture and we must not misuse other cultures.” Another student spoke seriously about the lessons he wanted his stakeholders to take away from his group’s project:

The things we want people to learn from our project are familiarity with tourists [and] acceptance of [different] cultures. . . These are very serious topics for today’s communities . . . considering that the goals of sustainable development are to improve the quality of life in all communities and abolish conflicts and tribal discrimination in all areas of the country.

Thirdly, some students demonstrated advanced values thinking skills in their ability to negotiate interactions with, and educate/inform stakeholders based on ethical claims. Notably, students who developed these skills worked on very complex sustainability issues. For example, one group of students addressed concerns with the proposed government plan to relocate residents living in and around the Bamyan World Heritage site. In this example, the government and UNESCO failed to acknowledge and respond to the concerns of the residents. A student described the living conditions of the residents living in the vicinity of the cultural sites in this way:

People who were living in the ancient sites had very bad [living] conditions. They were deprived of all the services of a normal life [such as] not enough water to use or other facilities . . . The elementary school was under a tent.

Another student described how their group’s project aimed to inform and educate the residents about the importance of the cultural heritage sites in a way that was personally meaningful and beneficial to them:

What I particularly want people to learn from our project is the importance of the green (natural landscape) and ancient sites. They shouldn’t think that they only belong to UNESCO and the government but should count them as their own property. . . People should . . . learn how to sustainably use these resources to not only benefit themselves but also keep them for the next generation.
By understanding their stakeholders’ conditions and values, then building their trust and collaboration, the students were able to effectively inform the residents effected by the proposed government plan of the benefits and importance of the cultural sites (an achievement that both UNESCO and the local government had failed to do (Jansen & Toubekis, 2020)).

Finally, most students expressed a sense of connection to the community where they were working, reflected in their feelings toward activism and sense of social responsibility. For example, a student reflected on how his sense of responsibility extended beyond the course: “I felt responsible about the course that I also can serve for my people.” Another student articulated how the course instilled in her citizenship and nation-building values: “[We] represent our family, the family represents the community, and the community represents the country so from every level we are symbols.” Another student expressed his realization of how important the cultural heritage sites were to his community’s identity. He explained how their groups’ project strategy aimed to help protect community values:

. . . we want people to know the ways to conserve and maintain historical and ancient relics. . . because historical and cultural heritage describes a community’s identity and conservation of them is the responsibility of all of us.

**Action-oriented competence**

Action-oriented competence requires that students are able to collectively develop plans, mobilize resources, carry-out roles and responsibilities, and implement interventions to reach sustainability goals. According to the students’ responses from the focus groups and reflective essays, 92 percent mentioned they gained action-oriented skills and attitudes during the project planning and community engagement phases of the SL course. The data patterns revealed two main groups of skills and attitudes most prevalent in students’ responses for action-oriented
competence: 1) collaboratively writing an original, structured, and concise proposal, and 2) performing specific interventions and responsibilities (see Table 4.2).

First, the students reported that the course taught them how to write an original, structured, and concise proposal to achieve an envisioned sustainability outcome. During the project planning phase, student groups had to design a proposal for addressing their tourism-focused sustainability issue in their community. The students previous lack of practical skills in writing a proposal were evident: “In fact, we did not know beforehand how the proposal could be made on what basis and how to write the proposal.” All the student groups had to revise their proposals three or more times before they were approved by the teacher. One student described the design elements and problem-solving skills that ultimately went into making their proposal come together:

In proposal [writing] the thing which is very important is the description of the issue or the problem that we want to research. . . After that we must evaluate the solutions and the problems. . . what things are needed in the project from human resources to material resources, also. . . what is our goal that we want to [achieve] when implementing the project. We learned these things and. . . we must hear from the stakeholders and design our proposal based on them.

Although several students argued that the time frame was not long enough to sufficiently hone their proposal writing skills, most students generally agreed that they learned the basic processes for developing a project proposal. Furthermore, students not only learned the mechanics of writing a proposal, they also learned the benefits proposal writing will have for their future, including funding opportunities and government credibility. For example, one student excitedly reported: “The proposal writing can help [with] our future. When we identify a project we know how to write a logical proposal which can attain the trust of the donor.” Another student mentioned, “We learned. . . proposal writing. When we go to the government offices if they ask do you have work experience we would respond to them ‘yes’ . . . it means we have work
experience that we did practically.” Other students articulated that proposal writing skills will help them with their future careers, as this student explains: “I am happy about this program because everyone has a plan to have a job in the future and that job or work requires research or for example requires proposal writing.”

Secondly, most students voiced they were surprised by their ability to perform specific interventions and responsibilities during the community engagement phase. Budgeting, risk management, documentation, adapting plans, and monitoring and evaluation were the most mentioned responsibilities. Students expressed that their self-confidence increased as they realized their own potential to perform different tasks. In a confident voice, this student explained how his perceptions about himself and his ability to implement a project changed through this course:

During this course I identified my abilities. . . I sincerely admit that before the implementation of this project, the formal project work was looking very difficult to me and I was not thinking that I could ever work in a project. . . And now I feel this potential in my heart that I can work in a team and successfully complete a planned project.

Another student expanded on how performing specific tasks and interventions allowed her to realize her potential:

The thing we learned in this project was that mostly we have lots of potentials, but these potentials were hidden. . . but now after this small project I came to know that I really can be a good rais and lead a team.

Displaying even more confidence in his potential a student wrote in his final essay, “and about implementing a project, I am a professional. I can implement the same project and even one more complicated than this project.”
**Systems thinking competence**

Students capable of systems thinking are able to analyze interconnections across different domains and scales to solve sustainability problems. Nearly half of the students, 44 percent, showed at least a basic level of systems understanding within sustainable tourism development. However, student attainment of systems thinking skills were harder to precisely code and evaluate compared to the other sustainability competencies as students did not frame their responses using systems thinking vocabulary and conceptualizations (see future research section for a further discussion on evaluating systems thinking competence). It was also difficult to infer which phases or activities of the course design students attributed to building their systems thinking competence. Students’ responses were coded to systems thinking if they described relationships between two or more domains or scales. Students’ described two groups of skills and attitudes they learned related to systems thinking: 1) identifying connections between local to global scales, and 2) visualizing or applying cause-effect relationships to sustainability problem-solving (see Table 4.2).

First, some students identified connections between local and global scales. For example, one student conveyed the local and global significance of preserving Bamyan’s natural and cultural heritage by articulating the need to “conserve these places so that tourists come and our Province and country become more global.” Another student, whose project involved an environmental education program for school students, explained the environmental problems at global scales and the importance of protecting their local environment. He concluded “all people should be diligent in conservation and maintenance of the environment because this phenomenon is very important for human life and is important in all life fields.”
Secondly, some students demonstrated the ability to visualize or apply cause-effect relationships to sustainability problem-solving. Students able to visualize cause-effect relationships demonstrated a surface-level systems thinking understanding, observed in comments such as: “The goal I have is to improve the tourism industry in Afghanistan so that people live in welfare because tourism can cause economic, social, cultural, and political improvement in one country or area.” Students able to apply cause-effect relationships demonstrated a more robust picture of systems thinking. Here students described their ability to inform stakeholders on the cause-effect relationships between cultural heritage, economy, self-identity, and well-being within tourism:

Historical and antique relics have remained for years and must remain now because they explain a culture, a tribe, and are the sign of our identity. . . [local people should] generally give importance to the environment and historical places and conserve them.

. . . they must know that their historical and antique heritages are their identity and value and must conserve them because so many other people wish to see [them]. . . and this will be a source of income for them.

I want to convince people via my own skills to conserve their historical relics because these are not only theirs but relate to all people who live in the world. And because these relics are situated in their area they may be a good source of income [for them], and conserving their historical and antique relics will provide a life full of well-being.

According to these quotes it was evident that students applied change processes working across disciplinary boundaries. However, it was unclear to what degree students were able to hone systems thinking competence based on the assessment tools selected for this study.

**Meta-competence: Integrated problem-solving**

Students capable of integrated problem-solving are able to analyze the complexity of sustainability problems and develop viable solutions. The focus group and reflective essay data
revealed that 44 percent of the students mentioned they learned skills related to integrated problem-solving (see Table 4.2). Students’ responses highlighted specific activities during the sustainability inquiry phase, as well as the project planning and community engagement phase as integral to building their integrated problem-solving competence. In parallel to the description in Wiek et al. (2015), the students’ accounts demonstrated that sustainability problem-solving was integrated into the groups of skills and attitudes students learned in the collaboration, values thinking, action-oriented, and systems thinking competencies.

Examples from students’ responses described the functions of the collaboration, values thinking, action-oriented, and systems thinking in integrated problem-solving. One group whose project involved educating residents on the importance of Bamyan’s cultural heritage sites discussed the reasoning behind residents’ previous lack of support for tourism activities in the Province. As one student said, “the problems that we encountered during this project were more social and cultural problems because our issue was intertwined with the local culture of these people” [Values Thinking]. Another student recalled how they addressed the problems by working with the religious leaders [Collaboration] to present information to the community at mosques [Action-Oriented]. This effort sought to educate the community about the compatibility between sustainable tourism practices and Shi’a religion to foster social change: “one of our problem was peoples’ culture that they see tourism as negative phenomenon. By offering examples from all over the globe and linking it to religion we could solve it” [Values Thinking; Systems Thinking]. Students also realized that tackling complex problems effectively, such as problems that require social change and transitions, required working as part of a team [Collaboration]:
. . . we learned during this project that the detection of a problem is also a very difficult order. We discussed a lot to detect our problem, and we figured out the problem which needed to be worked on. . . which is a big achievement.

Lastly, the following quote illustrated how the course design enhanced students’ abilities to identify and solve problems, which they, in turn, were able to implement in practice [Action-Oriented] and also intend to apply in other professional settings:

I participated actively and was very happy that [I] could practically proceed in reducing or removing the problems that existed in our environment or community. . . and it became a good motivation for me and now [I] can identify the next problems of our community and with a little budget can formally and practically proceed to solve them.
4. 2 Summary of students’ perceptions of the main groups of skills and attitudes gained during the SL course in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability competencies</th>
<th>Competency themes</th>
<th>Frequency % (N=55)</th>
<th>Groups of skills and attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Working as a team</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>coordinating team activities and tasks providing task assistance supporting equal voice respecting each other communicating intent and building rapport communicating in a culturally respectful manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborating with community stakeholders</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>identifying value differences among stakeholders applying sustainability concepts of equality and cultural humility negotiating interactions with, and educating/informing stakeholders based on ethical claims developing a sense of connection and social responsibility to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action-Oriented</td>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>collaboratively writing an original, structured, and concise proposal performing specific interventions and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>identifying connections between local to global scales visualizing or applying cause-effect relationships to sustainability problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Problem-Solving</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Identifying and solving problems integral to all the other sustainability competencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion and concluding remarks**

The analysis of the case study data identified tourism students’ perceptions of their sustainability competencies gained during a SL course at BU, Afghanistan. Our study specifically targets the gap in research on pedagogical approaches for teaching sustainability competencies in a formal education system in a conflict-affected context. Our evaluation of an
experiential SL course in Afghanistan demonstrates that the course not only imparted sustainability competencies on students, but also resulted in the following significant learning outcomes:

- students’ learning experiences led to self-discovery
- students experienced transformational learning through development of their sustainability competencies
- students built social relationships with the tourism sector and community stakeholders
- students gained strong conceptualizations of sustainability to address community stakeholders’ social needs

First, an unexpected outcome of building students’ sustainability competencies relates to what students described as self-discovery. Students’ description of their sustainability competencies learned demonstrated how the course built their self-confidence, self-identity, and social responsibility. The process of being accountable for performing specific interventions and seeing the impacts of their community project, resulted in students realizing their own potential. For example, students indicated that they gained self-confidence in their ability to communicate in a culturally respectful manner with stakeholders [Collaboration] and perform specific interventions and responsibilities [Action-Oriented]. Building students’ self-confidence in their ability to perform sustainability competencies also made them feel prepared for pursuing professional careers in the tourism sector. Some students also expressed that the course impacted their self-identity by informing their personal notions of citizenship and by providing a new sense of belonging to the community [Values Thinking]. Along the same lines, many students expressed that the course nurtured their social responsibility [Values Thinking] through building
their confidence to engaging with diverse stakeholders to achieve common goals [Collaboration]. Similarly, Dull’s (2009) study evaluating a SL project for youth in Serbia revealed that their project increased students’ “awareness of their power to act in the community” (p. 56). Eberly and Gal’s (2007) assessment of a SL course in Israel, observed that Arab girls engaged in SL in Jewish settings “expressed a new sense of connection to the state and a sense of the importance of their contributions, as well as a feeling of being accepted by the greater society and positive feelings about their contributions to it” (p. 81). Building students confidence and social responsibility in Afghanistan is important as Sahar and Kaunert (2021) highlight the need for higher education to provide more values-based practices to create a generation “bound by values of citizenship.” In sum, this study suggests that SL courses that incorporate sustainability competencies of action-oriented, collaboration, and values thinking have a vital role to play in stabilization efforts in Afghanistan and possibly other conflict-affected countries.

Similar to self-discovery, another important learning outcome was that students experienced a transformational learning process. Meaning that regardless of what specific skills or attitudes students gained, they came away with a changed view of their abilities. Notably, students did not perform the same leadership roles and therefore did not uniformly express gaining all the same skills and attitudes. Some students also pointed out that the time frame was not long enough to gain a feeling of competence at certain skills, such as proposal writing. However, regardless of the specific skills and attitudes students gained or how well they performed them, our findings revealed that the collective SL experience was transformational for students. Similarly, Trigos-Carillo et al.’s (2020) recent assessment of a SL course in post-conflict Columbia observed transformational change in students through the development of their skills in progress through real world learning experiences. In our study students’
transformational experience was demonstrated through their self-discovery and ability to reflect on the skills and attitudes required of them to accomplish their sustainability goals and future career trajectories.

Additionally, our findings highlight the potential role that SL can play in building relationships between students and the tourism sector founded on trust and collaboration to support stabilization efforts. At first, the students faced many challenges with gaining their community stakeholders’ trust and participation. This was not surprising considering the fear and lack of trust eminent in society after continuous wars and struggles. Taylor (2009) describes how working in states that have experienced prolonged violence and instability is not easy considering “developing relationships with community members who have lived in fear for their entire lives is a slow process that takes years, even decades” (p. 134). The SL model required students to identify value differences among stakeholders on sustainability issues. Students had to learn how to approach working with their stakeholders in a culturally responsive manner to gain their trust and participation in their project [Collaboration, Values Thinking, and Action-Oriented]. Through this process students gained important relationship building skills and attitudes founded on values of respect, equality, and cultural understanding. Sahar and Kaunert (2021) call for the need for higher education in Afghanistan to facilitate diversity, social cohesion, and shared visions for the future. They explain how relationships founded on values-based practices are lacking. Our findings show SL to be one potential approach to developing a ‘community of practice’ where students, instructors, and community stakeholders collaborate on addressing the needs of the tourism sector.

Finally, the course design allowed students to embrace the meaning of sustainability as per their own classroom and community setting. The first four phases of the course, designed
based on philosophies of multiculturalism and social constructivism, allowed students to explore – with safety and sensitivity to their academic and societal customs – the meaning of sustainability through the interactions they had with their peers and the community. By collaborating as part of a community team to address complex problems, that in some cases required social change, students saw how sustainability issues were intertwined in their local cultures. Hence, it can be concluded that the technical aspects of the course design enabled students to build strong conceptualizations of sustainability (emphasizing social dimensions, cultural humility, and community needs), that extended beyond the triple bottom line framework in tourism education.

Findings from the SL course indicate encouraging student outcomes regarding teaching sustainability competencies in conflict-affected contexts. For tourism educators considering adopting a SL course, there were several teaching and design components that were pivotal for achieving the aforementioned learning outcomes. First, providing students the freedom to make their own decisions when identifying, researching, planning, and implementing their project was important for students’ self-discovery. Secondly, providing students opportunities to fail and reflect on their experiences contributed to building students’ sustainability competencies. Finally, having students engage with their community stakeholders early and then continuously throughout the program allowed students time to build rapport and trusting relationships with them despite adversity.

**Future research**

The results of the case study suggest several opportunities for future research. First, based on the success of the SL model on building students’ sustainability competencies in a conflict-affected context, there is a need for future research exploring ways to integrate teaching
sustainability competencies in other courses and throughout the tourism curriculum at BU. For example, introducing students to collaboration competence early on in their program could provide students with foundational communication and teamwork skills for mastering higher-order groups of skills and attitudes in the later stages of their tourism program.

Secondly, this study has provided a baseline which can guide future course assessments and to evaluate tourism education and tourism sector outcomes. For example, the self-reporting tools we used to assess students’ sustainability competencies had limited capacity to capture complex learning outcomes such as systems thinking. The self-reporting data, although rich and reflective, may have underrepresented students’ competency in systems thinking given that the course objectives required students to analyze sustainability problems across different domains and identify complex intervention strategies. A combination of other assessment tools, such as those synthesized by Redman et al. (2021), should be tested for developing a more systematic approach to assessing students’ sustainability competencies. Furthermore, as Kassam et al. (2018) emphasize the need to understand how scientific conceptualizations of systems relate to the indigenous knowledge systems, future research is needed to ensure the SL pedagogy reflects a localized and easily perceptible understanding of systems thinking competence.

Finally, central to stabilization efforts in Afghanistan, future research to explore the potential of our SL model to contribute towards social transformation and peacebuilding would build on our findings. Our SL model showed that students learned important values of diversity, equity, and social responsibility as they established trusting relationships with their peers and community stakeholders. Other studies such as Levine and Bishai (2010) and Trigos-Carrillo et al. (2020) have highlighted the interplay between SL and peacebuilding. We hope that our findings will provide crucial insights to explore policy and implementation programs for
integrating values-based practices into the higher education system in Afghanistan, and in other conflict-affected environments, to foster peacebuilding.

Notes

1. The SL course was originally designed with the goals to teach students stakeholder engagement, critical thinking, actioning, systems thinking, and problem solving. It became clear after the implementation of the course that students’ learning outcomes were aligned with five out of six of Wiek et. al.’s (2015) sustainability competencies. Futures thinking was not adopted as it did not strongly align with the specific learning outcomes of the course. However, Wiek et al.’s competencies still provided a more representative framework to assess students’ learning outcomes overall.

2. While acknowledging the multiple interpretations of the term ‘competence’ used in education literature and their utility, we adopt Wiek et al.’s (2011) definition of competence as a “functionally linked complex of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable successful task performance” (p. 204).

3. According to the Afghan National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) the population of Bamyan Province was 478,424 in 2018-2019.


5. The student projects took a holistic approach to investigate environment-society interactions with the student groups selecting to work on tourism issues connected to cultural heritage, livelihoods, and environmental quality.
6. Community stakeholders refers to the groups the students partnered with during the SL course such as government officials, owners of tourism agencies, health practitioners, school leaders, shopkeepers, religious leaders, and community leaders (known locally as *Shuras*).

7. The same focus group and reflective essay questions were delivered during both years of the study. Deficiencies in the translation of instructions and students’ own misunderstandings were identified in 2016, with attempts to clarify instructions during this phase of the study. Concerns about data quality led to a decision to not report the frequency data here. Adjustments were made to instructions in 2017 to ensure the collection of robust data and valid student responses and descriptive data.
References


CHAPTER 5

Restoring Respect: Effects of Service Learning in Conflict-affected Bamyan, Afghanistan

Abstract

Service learning theories and values-based education are rarely considered in the design of higher education programs in conflict-affected regions such as Afghanistan. However, if students are instructed in a way in which they can link their university-level learning with community needs and local scale development, then this could support the educational experience through better social and cultural understanding. A service learning course at Bamyan University was evaluated to identify the effect of context (cultural and social values of respect) and innovative pedagogy on students values-based learning outcomes. The authors discuss the instructional approach and students’ perceptions of their service learning experience and how themes of respect for autonomy, equality, and culture emerged. The analysis provides valuable information for the development of effective higher education programs, enhancing student and teacher participation, and empowering students to contribute to local solutions and stabilization efforts.

Introduction

The policy and strategy roadmap for higher education (HE) in Afghanistan demonstrates a shared vision among Afghanistan’s academic leadership to enhance student learning, ensure social equity, and contribute to stabilization and peacebuilding efforts (MoHE, 2016; MoHE, 2017). However, the complex histories and politics that continue to shape the Afghan HE system cause fear that the teaching and learning environments advance stereotypes and undermine stabilization efforts (Sahar & Kaunert, 2021). For HE to serve and support stabilization efforts, the sector must work to build mutual respect and trust between people (Hayward, 2015; Leslie,
In Sahar and Kaunert’s (2021) recent study of HE and peacebuilding in Afghanistan, they recognize the potential of HE to help mitigate social distrust and tensions currently formed by divided ethnic, political, and religious identities. Sahar and Kaunert specifically call for the HE sector to teach values-based competencies such as equity, diversity, tolerance, respect for others and the environment, and social responsibility. To respond to this call, it is paramount to understand how educators in Afghanistan can integrate values-based competencies into curricula, considering the social and cultural landscapes.

Service learning (SL) is one pedagogical approach that can promote and shape values important for society through incorporating a place-based, learner-centered, open, and dynamic vision of education. SL is a type of experiential learning, that aims to equally benefit the students and the community served (Furco, 1996). It seeks to empower students to act responsibly and to identify then contribute to addressing needs at the local level. SL also plays an important role in orienting the individual toward inter-personal, inter-cultural, and ethical sensitivity (Zlotkowski, 1996). Research has shown how SL can contribute to community empowerment and trust as well as deeper understanding and respect for cultural differences among participants (Kimsey, 1999).

Moreover, research has shown that appropriate SL opportunities and outreach can help foster social action, creative problem solving, improve public support for higher education, and make education relevant to place (Guo et al., 2016; Lewis, 2004; Terrance et al., 2018). Building further, Trigos-Carrillo et al. (2020) demonstrated how the real-life learning processes of SL can lead to individual and social transformation in conflict-affected contexts.

Nevertheless, in Afghanistan SL is not widely incorporated in the national HE curricula, which is oriented towards passive learning, reinforces narrow skill development and values thinking, and makes it difficult for university students to become collaborative learners and
change agents. National level curriculum suffers a deficiency of student awareness and participation, and unfortunately, the adoption of innovative pedagogical approaches such as SL have in part been curtailed by the widespread destructive unraveling of Afghan HE due to war and conflict. Thus, while the benefits of teaching values-based competencies through community engagement have been acknowledged, there have been limited activities and research conducted to explore how HE curricula can be restructured to build such competencies (Sahar and Kaunert, 2021).

In this study, we explore the potential of SL to address major deficiencies in current teaching approaches in the particular context of Bamyan, central Afghanistan. Herein we report on the evidence for SL to build students’ values-based competencies. Other outcomes such as building students’ sustainability competencies were addressed elsewhere (see Chapter 4). Early in our preliminary discussions with the university faculty, students, and community members it was evident that cultural values that include respect were important to the local visions for HE. Respect is often encapsulated in SL theory of reciprocity, mutuality, student-centered learning, and citizenship (Porter & Monard, 2001; Rauschert & Byram, 2018). However, respect is vaguely conceptualized and minimally operationalized as a teaching practice and learning outcome in SL literature. Despite the lack of literature connecting SL and respect, we discovered that theoretical conceptualizations of respect would serve as a lens to analyze the significance of the SL model in building students’ values-based competencies.

With the importance of the local level in mind, we assessed the SL experience for students in the Department of Tourism at Bamyan University (BU). We examined the evidence for the effects of service learning and geographic context on building students’ values-based competencies. Specifically, we interrogated how a specific SL course could help to guide much
needed transformation and restructuring efforts in HE curricula, and in students’ contributions to addressing community needs and restoring culturally relevant values of respect. The study uses an ethnographic and mixed methods approach to explore the following research questions:

1. How does the instructional approach of the SL course contribute to students’ values-based learning outcomes?
2. What are the conceptualizations of respect as perceived by teacher and student participants in the SL course?
3. What are the ways in which SL could build relationships within the community on the basis of societal values of respect?

It is our hope that this study will assist in starting a process of reflection or a dialogue between colleagues or between learners and teachers, about how Afghan university students from conflict-affected communities can participate in local solutions, restore social relations, and overcome social upheaval. Before we explain our case study and the methodology for this study, we discuss the literature on respect and SL and our theoretical rational for using respect as a lens to assess students’ values-based learning outcomes.

**Theorizing respect in spaces of learning**

Respect is a rich and widely used term in social science and education literature and is interpreted differently in varying contexts. Recent work in the last two decades to conceptualize respectful behavior has included functional concepts such as ascribed agency (Schirmer et al., 2012), equality/egalitarianism (Goodman, 2009), hierarchy (Bankston & Hidalgo, 2006), autonomy, and reciprocity (Goodman, 2009; O’Grady, 2015). In education literature, only a small number of studies have conceptualized teaching values of respect in HE (e.g. Goodman, 2009; O’Grady, 2015). For this research, three categories of respect – respect-as-autonomy,
respect-as-equality, and respect for culture – emerged from our initial data analysis (see methods section below). Although this chapter does not have room to discuss the nature of these types of respect and how they are intertwined in-depth, we briefly present how they are conceptualized in education and enshrined in the HE ideals in Afghanistan.

**Respect-as-autonomy**

The freedom to act as one chooses and appreciate similar rights in others is the foundation of what many theorists view as respect-as-autonomy (Rawls, 1999; O’Grady, 2015; Scoccia, 1990). Goodman (2009) provides examples of how respect-as-autonomy is used in classroom settings. A teacher who guides students in their own decision making, such as selecting their own research topic, is emphasizing respect-as-autonomy towards their students. Goodman further explains how respect-as-autonomy is often disputed by the teacher and the students in the classroom. The teacher may try to give the students more independence, while the students may prefer to have more guidance from the teacher or visa-versa.

In countries like Afghanistan, one must consider academic freedom when examining respect-for-autonomy in HE. The Russian invasion and Taliban rule in Afghanistan decreased educational freedom as students and faculty members found themselves forced to follow predefined ideologies. The new constitution ratified in 2004 guarantees freedom of expression through speech, writing, illustrations, and other means. Today teachers and students are more able to freely express themselves than in the past, but not without certain caution from the more conservative groups or the Taliban. The individual freedom that is expanding today in the HE system in Afghanistan has the potential to play a critical role in teacher-student relationships and students’ ability to rethink values and expand social opportunities within their communities (Hayward, 2015).
**Respect-as-equality**

In this study, the practice of respect-as-equality encompasses two things. First it is centered on reciprocity and acting on one’s moral code towards respecting other’s interests and treating others with the same dignity as one perceives themselves (O’Grady, 2015). Building on this idea, Goodman (2009), in referring to Kant’s respect for the moral law, states how “universal acceptance of the inherent dignity and rationality characterizing all people ties respect to equality” (p. 6). In Afghanistan, a famous Hazaragi proverb emphasizes the importance of respect-as-equality:

> هر کس بَلی نَمَدِ اندختی خو میشینه (Har kas bali nemad andakhtekho meshina)

> “Everyone will sit on the nemad (felt) that he flattened”

The nemad, a felt carpet or mat made by rolling and pressing wool, is a common handicraft found in Afghan homes upon which people sit or sleep. A professor at BU explained the meaning of the proverb: “Everyone sits on that nemad which is paved by themselves, or everyone will be respected as much they respect others.” Like the Hazara proverb, respect-as-equality implies showing reciprocal exchange and acceptance of a shared humanity.

Second, respect-as-equality is tied to acceptance of differences in race, gender, religion, national origins, age, and class (Langdon, 2007). This key value is articulated in the 2004 Afghan Constitution and prioritized in the HE system which promotes national unity and equality between all peoples, including a balanced education for women. However, Afghanistan’s history of ethnic and social tension requires sophisticated approaches to peacebuilding that fosters respect and understanding for others (Sahar & Kaunert, 2021). Furthermore, a perceived tolerance for inequality, based on social power and hierarchies, manifests in the university system as rote learning, with the teacher having absolute power and
the students having limited decision-making powers (Entezar, 2008). Thus, ideals of respect-as-equality are often difficult to fully incorporate in a HE system where the teacher has indisputable authority (Arnesen, 2012). Despite the current format of HE in Afghanistan, the university-level education system has a key role to play in acting as a unifying force while providing a learning environment with mutual understanding and respect-as-equality (Hayward, 2015; Sahar & Kaunert, 2021; Spink, 2005).

**Respect for culture**

The third type of respect that we would like to distinguish is respect for culture. Redwick (2008) explained that understanding what “constitutes respectful behavior is embedded in one’s culture” (p. 153). For this research we adopt elements of Triandis et al.’s (1993) definition that culture includes objective and subjective characteristics. Objective characteristics are material elements such as dress, food, architecture, and tools (Triandis, 2002), whereas subjective characteristics refers to social elements of culture which points “to some characteristic way of behavior of a category of people” (Jahoda, 2012, p. 300). Conceiving of culture in these two ways implies that respect for culture requires one to be sensitive towards the symbolic material objects as well as the core behavioral elements that are imbedded in one’s ideas, beliefs, and traditions (Goodman, 2009).

Afghanistan is rich in ethnic and linguistic diversity. Cultural characteristics tend to be strongly situational within the social environment. In the university settings, examples of respect for objectives characteristics of culture include respect for the Islamic tradition of separate seating for male and female students as well as students following dress codes. Examples of respect for subjective characteristics can include allowing the teacher or elders to enter the classroom or walk first, students standing up when the teacher is entering class, and avoiding
sustained eye contact with opposite genders. Respect for cultural and institutional norms functions to provide cohesiveness inside of the university environment. This level of etiquette is especially important given the multiethnic influences that exist in Afghanistan and the history of conflict that is fresh and ongoing in the minds of many in the country even today. As Mujtaba (2013) and others point out, Afghans can and must create an inclusive work culture that respects people of all ethnicities and languages regardless of their different political views.

**Service learning and values-based outcomes**

Educators across different cultures may agree on the importance of teaching central values such as respect, however, values get their meaning within a context (Veugelers & Vedder, 2003) and are “defined relative to a particular culture” (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972, p. 464). Thus, academic institutions embody the values in society and curricula and individual teachers also play a major role in influencing student values (Halstead & Taylor, 1996). Given the role of curricula and teachers in developing student values, it can be argued that all teaching and learning practices incorporate values (Phi & Clausen, in press). However, certain forms of education have intentional pedagogical practices for influencing the development of student values (e.g. experiential learning, environmental education, place-based education, moral education, and sustainability education).

SL is one type of experiential learning that has been widely adopted in education programs internationally for its ability to influence students’ values-based outcomes. A key element to SL that distinguishes it from other forms of experiential learning is “reciprocity”, meaning that both the students (provider) and community (recipient) benefit from the experience (Furco, 1996; Henry & Breyfogle, 2006; Porter & Monard, 2001). For mutual benefit, all sides
must ascribe value to the interactions, and all must seek to foster a reciprocal foundation of respect, trust, and accountability (Hatziconstantis & Kolmpari, 2016).

While research on SL in conflict-affected contexts is lacking, many studies within the university context in the Global North have demonstrated that SL is an effective approach for teaching values-based outcomes tied to respect. For example, Oling-Sisay’s (2018) study assessing the impacts of SL in marginalized Black communities in the US revealed that students were able to “critically learn about the societal, social, historical, political, [environmental], and economic factors that perpetuates inequalities” and collectively address these problems with the community served (p. 48). Other advantages of SL include building students’ sense of identity and acceptance of others from the experiences and reflections they gain from entering a culture different from their own (Trigos-Carrillo et al., 2020). Similarly, Merrill (1999) observed how incorporating SL in a peace studies program in the US was a successful approach to having students understand and explore stereotyping of others, intercultural communication, and identity formation. Other SL studies such as Butin (2003) emphasize the value of learning respect:

. . .service learning can be seen as a means of fostering in the individual a respect for and increased tolerance of diversity, to gain a greater awareness of societal concerns, to develop a stronger moral and ethical sense. . . By engaging with those different from themselves--with “difference” primarily understood across racial, ethnic, class, and sexual orientation lines--students will come to better understand, respect, and engage with the cultural plurality of our diverse society. (p. 1680-1681)

Terrance et al. (2018) demonstrated how a SL experience premised on reciprocal learning, social justice, and cultural humility served as a transformative way to facilitate cross-cultural engagement between predominately, white students and a Native American community. Their study showed how guiding students on academic-community collaboration resulted in student readiness to engage with communities in a culturally thoughtful and respectful way. Finally, studies have demonstrated how providing students greater autonomy and responsibility for their
learning influences their positive attitudes towards social equity and citizenship values (Birdwell et al., 2013; Brown et al., 2016).

Studies on the impacts of SL have demonstrated how the teacher can shape the classroom and community climate around values of respect. Unlike their traditional role in an academic environment, the teachers in SL models serve as facilitators in guiding students to engage in a process of preparation, implementation, reflection, and celebration (Jenkins & Sheehey, 2011). Pribbenow’s (2005) study on SL demonstrated that deeper relationships formed between the teacher and students resulting in teachers viewing students more as experts in their own learning experiences. Shared authority led to teachers changing classroom activities to peer learning exercises and student self-reflection. By extension, Major and Palmer (2006) agrees that teachers engaged in SL become “much more aware of students as people and as co-learners in the new pedagogical context” (p. 633). In other words, teachers learn to respect and support students as autonomous learners, which are perspectives and value sets upon which a culture of respect is predicated.

The case of Bamyan

The unique socio-cultural situation in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan lends opportunities for HE to engage teachers, students, and communities in learning activities premised on trust and respect. Bamyan Province is located in central Afghanistan’s Hazarajat region in the Hindu Kush Mountains. The ethnic majority in the region are the Hazaras, followed by Sayeds, and Tajiks. The majority of Hazaras and Sayeds living in Bamyan Province are Shi’a Muslims, a religious minority in a dominantly Sunni Muslim Afghan state. Shi’a Hazaras have been perceived as the underclass of Afghan society and have experienced a long history of marginalization from the ethnic Pashtun dominated Afghan State. The Post-Taliban international assistance to Bamyan has
been considered a “golden” opportunity for Hazaras, as some Hazaras have taken advantage of educational and professional opportunities (Choivenda, 2015). According to Choivenda, Hazara activists are at the center of promoting the western ideals of democracy, equality, and open-mindedness in Afghanistan. However, Hazaras perceived ongoing marginalization from the Afghan state as well as interethnic conflicts and social divisions continues to undermine and erode trust, which must be bridged to create a more tolerant and stable society.

BU, the province’s only public university established in 1998, has strategically identified its role in fostering tolerance and respect through teaching, research, and service to the community. In 2010, BU identified tourism as a sector with potential for growth and professional opportunities for younger generation and launched the first tourism degree program in Afghanistan. Through tourism education, students can develop skills, connect to stakeholders, and understand the complexities of socioecological problems to guide them to take action for sustainable tourism and natural resource conservation. However, building relationships founded on trust and respect between the students and communities will require more action and reform beyond mere planning in the HE system. Hence, the tourism program at BU provides a case study for examining the potential for a SL course to help guide transformations in HE curricula and in building students’ values-based competencies for addressing community needs and restoring respect.

Methods and procedures

The service learning course at Bamyan University

In this chapter, we examine the instructional approach and values-based learning outcomes of the “Environmental Citizenship through Applied Community Service Learning” course, for tourism undergraduates at BU. One of the goals of the SL course was to empower BU
students to collaboratively research, design, and implement their own tourism-related sustainability project in their community and gain values-based competencies. The course followed an interdisciplinary approach centered on a 5-stage curriculum model (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Description of the 5-stage curriculum model (Franklin & Mosavi, 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Exploration of ethics and values</td>
<td>Students explore their sense of place and how sense of place influences community members’ social and environmental ethical decisions in Bamyan.</td>
<td>3 class sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sustainability inquiry</td>
<td>Students select a tourism-focused sustainability issue that they want to improve and research the issues in their community.</td>
<td>3 weeks, 4-5 class sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Project planning</td>
<td>Students develop an action plan to improve the tourism-focused sustainability issue in their community.</td>
<td>3 weeks, 4-5 class sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Project implementation</td>
<td>Students engage community stakeholders in implementing their action plan.</td>
<td>2 weeks, no class sessions, students are actively engaged in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reflection and celebration</td>
<td>Students, teachers, and community stakeholders reflect and celebrate the outcomes of the project.</td>
<td>3 hours, awards ceremony at the end of the course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The course was designed to introduce students to real life problems, provide student-centered instruction, productive group interaction, as well as reflective assessment to demonstrate student progress. Multiculturalism and place-based learning were selected as teaching philosophies for informing the design of the course. Given that it is important to teach diversity in tourism context and the unique cultural ethnic diversities of Afghanistan that must be considered, we integrated specific activities to have students understand stakeholders’ beliefs, values, and their positions around tourism sustainability issues. Place-based instructional
approaches were designed to immerse students deeply in experiencing social interactions in their local community and enable student agency and personalized learning (Please see Franklin and Mosavi (2017) for the full course description, objectives, and activities).

The course was organized around a three-year implementation plan to build the capacity of the teachers to deliver the course. During the pilot year, Franklin instructed the course while guiding three teachers from BU in the delivery. The second year, Franklin had minimal participation in class instruction, but provided regular guidance and encouragement to two teachers from the tourism department on delivery. The third year, only one teacher was available to teach the course and was provided full responsibility for delivering the course. Franklin observed classroom activities and only provided guidance at the teacher’s request. This study assessed the instructional approach and students’ perceptions of their values-based competencies learned for the latter two years.

Subjects

There were 56 student participants in the SL course during the Fall, 2016 academic semester and 55 participants in the Fall, 2017. Students were in their third year of study. Students were divided into groups of 12-15 students for researching, designing, and implementing their SL projects. The teacher who observed the course the pilot year and taught the course during the two years of this study, was the focus of this study. He had several years of full-time teaching experience in the Department of Tourism prior to teaching this course. In addition, a guest teacher in the SL course, who was familiar with the SL pedagogy from the pilot year, was included as a participant in this study.
Data collection and analysis

Ethnographic notes and classroom video recordings were used to capture general observations of the teacher and student classroom interactions during the SL course. Observing classroom videos also allowed for selective and specific transcription and translation of teachers’ and students’ comments and questions. Two video recordings were taken at the start of the course, two at the half-way point, and two towards the end of the course each year to cross-check and enhance the ethnographic notes. To capture the students’ experiences and perspectives of their values-based competencies gained during the SL course, focus groups and reflective essays were facilitated with students at the end of the course. The data sets were analyzed through identifying and coding of emergent themes using NVivo qualitative software. Early in our analysis, themes of respect (احترام) emerged from the empirical data and observations recorded during the course. Grounded theory procedures were then used to carefully analyze the themes of respect according to theoretical understandings.

Results

We have chosen several demonstrative moments to illustrate the effects of the instructional approach on building students’ values-based competencies during the SL course. Our approach draws upon “moments” inspired by sociologists Rooks and Winkler (2012) in their paper on interdisciplinarity and SL. Each moment is presented as a series of excerpts from video transcripts, student focus groups, reflective essays, and ethnographic notes, explaining outcomes of a unique set of events that occurred during the implementation of the course. The first moment demonstrates the development of new themes and modes of respect that accompanied the classroom paradigm shift. With the second moment, we explain the challenges students faced and their perceived learning outcomes while conducting research with residents, and the
teachers’ guidance in this process. Lastly, in the third moment we show how the classroom and community climate shaped students values-based learning outcomes during the project planning and implementation phases of the course. Collectively, the three moments aim to demonstrate how the teacher and student participants conceptualized respect for autonomy, equality, and culture through their experiences during the SL course.

**Moment 1: The paradigm shift**

The first moment reveals the foundational set of values-based knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students needed to develop and the social dynamics that unfolded as students were exposed to a new way of learning in the classroom. The moment draws attention to the role of the teacher in facilitating the paradigm shifts in students’ learning but aims to shed light on the students’ experience at the beginning of the SL course. This moment was the third activity in the Exploration of Ethics and Values phase. The objective of the activity was to have students illustrate different social and environmental ethical decisions that have taken place in their community through poster presentations. The activity guidance specified the following structure. First, the teacher facilitates a class discussion about the meaning of ethics and an ethical dilemma. Second, the teacher asks the class to provide examples of current environmental ethical dilemmas being debated in the news or in their community related to tourism then writes them on the board. Third, students are divided into small groups to create a poster illustrating one of the issues described on the board that addresses both sides of the argument. Forth, students present their posters to the class.

The following is a description of the third day of class presented from Franklin’s ethnographic notes. The setting described here was typical of the class sessions observed during the first half of the SL course.
I arrived to the cramped classroom with over 45 students seated in broken chairs and disorganized rows. Eight female students were seated in the front rows on one side (Excerpt from EN-Sept 16, 2017).

Afghan university classrooms are commonly arranged in rows with females and males seated separately. One of the female translators informed us that the male students always leave several rows in the front of the room for their female classmates, “even if there are only a few girls, to avoid any touching.”

When we designed the course, we were skeptical of whether the BU students would be receptive towards changing their traditional learning methods to active and student-centered learning. The design of the course challenged the traditional classroom setting in many ways (students arranged in groups, male and female students working together, and a high level of student engagement and leadership).

The teacher had to help the students reinvent their expectations of what their classroom roles were and introduce them to different attitudes and approaches to this environment as students. Within the first 10 minutes of starting the activity the teacher had engaged students in an active classroom discussion about the meaning of ethics and behavior. He called on students and asked questions that triggered interactions, such as, “Do any of you oppose or have questions?” He also used discursive practices to encourage critical dialogue of students in the class who were not participating. For example, “When you are presenting your stuff or issues you must have questions or criticize if you don't agree. And those presenting must be able to defend what they are saying.” For all the students this was their first time experiencing this type of classroom setting. The following video transcription sheds light on the teacher’s approach towards motivating and reinventing the students’ expectations:

This is the third year in your university. I know that you have not done any kind of groupwork and you have not sat in the class for more than 1 hour and 20 minutes.
And I believe and know that none of you have come in front of the class and presented speeches and talked about specific issues. So that is why we added this to your curriculum, for your benefit, so that you can find the spirit and can share your scientific education in the discussions and debates and become strong.

As the classroom social dynamics continued to develop, it became apparent that students first needed to learn foundational values related to the theme of respect-as-equality. First the female students needed to build their confidence to actively participate in classroom discussions. The following is an excerpt of the teacher motivating the female students to participate:

You make up one-third of this class (talking to the female students), and from the other side you have heard a lot about publicity and programs of gender. There are discussions [at BU] that gender must be considered. . . So just participate and share your ideas and points of views. So, if two boys are answering at least one girl should answer and share her idea. It doesn’t work if you only sit here, listen and watch, okay. We want to have your idea. Only say what comes to your heart, what you observe from your own ethics and behavior.

A female student quickly responded, and the teacher asked her to stand as the male students had done. The teacher demonstrated respect-as-equality by engaging all the students behaviorally and cognitively in academic classroom tasks. The teacher’s stern, yet inclusively motivational approach, was a central theme for teaching the students respect to gender equality throughout the course.

The second foundational value that many students needed to learn was respect-as-equality towards the social status of their peers. In one instance, an argument broke out between two male students when the teacher was asking the class to provide examples of ethical dilemmas in their society. The students were discussing the contentious issue about the electric power transmission link, known as TUTAP. Many of the Hazara protested over the plan to reroute the power line through Salang Pass, rather than through Bamyan Province. The students were debating the pros and cons of rerouting the line when one of the male students interrupted another student by saying, “You sit boy, we are the same 14 class, we have been studying
[together] and we are at the same stage so how can you answer my question. I asked from the teacher and the presenter.” In response to this argument taking place the teacher interrupted by saying:

Look boys, you took birth in a family, you are nourished in a family, in a school, and later a university. So if you don't have the ethics and character of a student and don’t have mutual respect and if you don’t respect your classmates, your parents, and teachers and don’t talk with respectful words to your classmates and others so you have no difference with an animal.

The teacher then continued by saying:

Let me tell you this, whether this results in me leaving the tourism department, today I seriously request you and tell you that you are free in different fields in the class, and you can discuss with each other in any style, but you can never insult a teacher or your classmates and misuse this freedom. After this no one has this right. In the open talks if anyone talks about any issue which is kind of an offensive [one], he has no right to be in the class and after this we will make this class disciplined. Please note this point.

The meaning and significance of this passage is twofold. First, the teacher shows his commitment to the course and his classroom management style. In fact, he exclaims he is willing to risk his teaching position over his changed role as facilitator and the freedom or respect-as-autonomy he is providing his students to participate as active learners. Second, the teacher shows the students he has zero tolerance for disrespectful classroom behavior which he explains in a disciplined and controlling manner. He directs his students to take each other seriously, cooperate, and contribute. Therefore, by creating a climate for respect-as-equality and respect-as-autonomy and showing students that they are no longer passive recipients of the teacher’s knowledge, the teacher is mentoring and directing students to take responsibility of their own behavior.
Moment 2: Theory verses the real-world

This moment describes the challenges students encountered when meeting with members of the community during the Sustainability Inquiry phase of the SL course, and the teachers’ motivational role preparing and supporting the students through the process. During the two years that were observed the portion of instruction covered by this moment and the challenges students faced showed strong similarities between both years. Therefore, the moment includes the same class segment from year one and year two. Prior to this moment the student groups worked with the teacher to select a tourism sustainability issue that they wanted to research and address. The teacher used several approaches in guiding student groups to select their projects, including listing their choices on the board and probing questions on timeframe, budget, and other strategic considerations. This moment encompasses three weeks in the semester when the students had to research their selected issue by identifying the stakeholders involved, developing a research protocol, conducting their research in the community, and analyzing the results. The insights gathered through their research were intended to inform their action plans, which they would design and implement later in the course. Class sessions during this activity focused on guiding students in research ethics, preparing their research instruments, and data analysis. Students were provided class time to share their research design and findings with the class to receive feedback from the teacher and from other student groups.

An example of one student group’s research topic was the issues around how to best manage two cultural heritage sites in Bamyan center, the famous Buddha statues built in the 5th and 6th century, and Shar-e-Ghogola, an ancient ruin also known as the “City of Screams” which was conquered by Ghenghis Khan in the 13th century. The students wanted to address the problems of waste management, graffiti, and other forms of destruction to the cultural heritage
The students identified their main stakeholders involved in the issue as the Department of Information and Culture, the municipality, tourists, and the residents who live around the cultural sites (see Table 5.2). Students developed semi-structured interviews for each of these stakeholder groups to explore their activities, beliefs, and values around protecting the sites.

Most of the student groups identified residents as a key stakeholder group involved in their issue. This moment is limited to students’ encounters while interviewing residents only, although each group interviewed a variety of stakeholders. The students designed interviews or questionnaires to elicit residents’ different perceptions and beliefs about their issue. However, as the students endeavored to understand the residents’ positions around their selected issue to help inform their action plan, they encountered different challenges during the interview process.

We examined the instructional practice, the perceived challenges students encountered while interviewing residents in the community, and how this contributed towards students’ values-based learning outcomes tied to respect. In the following paragraphs, we present the moment by first describing the instructional approach towards preparing the students for their research in the community. Following this, we share the microcultural challenges students encountered as described in their own words while interviewing the residents. Finally, we report students’ perceptions of their values-based learning outcomes as a result of experiencing these challenges.

**Instructional approach**

As this was the first activity that the students had to do outside of class, the teacher’s main goal was to give them more control over tasks to lead them towards more independent learning and increased intrinsic motivation. To remind students of their independence, the teacher made a respect-as-autonomy assertion:
It is the duty of the team leader to organise the team members and divide the duties. In the coming three weeks everything is on you, you are the manager, controller, observer. . . And if there are any problems we will give some advice, but management is all on you.

The teacher had to emphasize to the students the importance of participating in this course as not just a means towards earning a grade, but for building their skills. He sought to enhance students’ intrinsic motivation to work independently and take responsibility for their decision making by iterating to the students:

This action program is more important than the other subjects you study this semester. So those who are looking for knowledge, those who are looking for skills of learning, those who are looking for awareness, this is the best opportunity to work in and grow.

In attempts to make the students take the course more seriously the teacher informed the students that they would be required to properly follow university dress code in the classroom. The BU dress code prohibits male students from wearing the traditional clothing. However, this is not uniformly enforced. Some of the male students were wearing the traditional clothing (tonban) or t-shirts. Appearance is of considerable utility for perceiving one’s position, education, and social status in Afghan society. In work place or professional settings in Afghanistan, western business attire is the norm for men. The teacher’s expectations were for the students to display respect for culture by following university norms. He told the class:

Today must be the first day and the last day that someone is coming to the course wearing local cloth. Do not make the university, our class, like a five-star hotel. . . so that everybody comes wearing anything that they like. I am not threatening you, but telling you clearly, and beg you to obey the principles seriously.

The students also had to learn the process of conducting social research in their groups. In the second year of the study a guest teacher from the social science faculty was invited to help prepare students for the real-life situations they would encounter while interviewing respondents in the community. He began the class discussion by providing examples of multicultural research
practice from his own experiences and challenges he faced working with multiethnic and multtribal groups abroad. He explained how showing respect for culture towards local traditions and beliefs is imperative towards building interview respondents’ trust:

When I was in that area the people were respecting their temples a lot. So at the time I had to respect them as well because they were sensitive about that. There were places where I was not supposed to go [as a foreigner]. . . And once I didn't know that I shouldn't go there, and I went, so afterwards . . . I felt like I diminished my relations with them a bit or maybe the people lost their trust in me.

In that passage, the guest teacher aimed to deepen the students’ acceptance of cultural differences and diversity. He framed the importance of building social trust to mediate gaining research respondents’ rapport by emphasizing respect for culture.

The guest teacher continued by emphasizing respect-as-equality for ethnic, religious, and sectarian identities. He explained how being respectful towards social differentiation and building trust with research respondents all affect the practice of social research:

In our own community, it is right that we are all from one area but there are some differences from one village to another. These differences must be understood and respect must be built among people. And uh, these are the things you have to consider when you are doing research and will help you to get the information you want. So that you build a kind of trust and no conflict is created.

He elaborated by providing an approach he used to gain his respondents’ trust through showing respect-as-equality and respect for culture:

When I was going to them so firstly I would tell them that our faces match to each other, I am one of you people and that I love all the things that you do, the dress and culture, and things like these. I don't feel any differences between us. So this helped me to establish relationships with them.

He went on to describe why it is important that the students clearly explain to their research respondents their intentions on how they will use the information. He explained the common practice in social research of researchers explaining who they are, the purpose of the
research, and how the information will be used by their respondents while emphasizing the voluntary and confidential nature of the study.

_Students’ experiences_

The students found implementing the teachers’ instructions in practice challenging as they attempted their first foray into the overwhelming field of social research. In the first week, the teacher’s strictness and approach towards providing the students’ respect-as-autonomy caused many of the students to be nervous about the possibility of failure. The new teaching and learning environment required students to learn new skills and to take charge of their own decision making. This prospect left most of the students anxious. In reflecting upon the course experience, one student put it this way:

. . . at the beginning of this course or project hmm, we had a series of stresses in ourselves about whether we can implement it, or not, or with what difficulty we may face, going to the stakeholders. Do they accept us with open attitude? We had these things on our mind.

The pressure manifested positively in active group discussions with the students collaborating closely together, voicing their concerns, and motivating one another. The students discussed their research plans intently. A conversation by one student group in class revealed that they were concerned about the marks they would receive in this course and how it would affect their academic standing. Other voices in the group talked about how they needed to have a high quality research project to showcase their skills so that the teacher would act favorable towards them. This suggested that in the beginning of the Sustainability Inquiry phase many of the students were motivated to succeed to earn a good grade and satisfy the teacher, despite the teachers’ emphasis on having intrinsic motivation to learn new skills and values.
Once the students developed their research plan, most groups went to conduct their interviews in single-gendered teams of two or three students. Difficulties were encountered, and disappointment arose when students found residents resistant to participate in their research. As one student commented, “When we asked someone to fill out the questionnaire they refused our request and we did not know how to convince them to answer us.” The students’ identified two main reasons for experiencing challenges with gaining residents’ consent to participate in their interviews.

The first reason was the students’ failure to adapt to the local language, appearance, and customs associated with respondent’s beliefs and traditions. In Bamyan province, Hazarahs make up the ethnic majority followed by Sayeeds, Tajiks, and Qizilbash. Differing tribal and sectarian identities exist within these ethnic groups. Despite the guest teacher’s efforts to sensitize the students about the cultural challenges they might encounter during their research, it appeared that the students needed first-hand experience to contextualize what that meant in practice. Students provided several descriptions of how they had to adapt their research protocols to show respect for local languages and conversational customs: For example, one student explained how they had to adapt their research protocols to show respect for culture:

My aim about observing their culture was that umm the speech and accents are different at different places. . . For example, suppose we go to a rural area of Bamyan and speak with them in Gaghor (a district in Ghazni) accent. At that time they will not understand well. . . They will think that we show off to them. We should communicate with them as if we were a child from their village. Like this we can have their trust and we can reach to our purpose as well.

Respect for culture was also tied to dress and appearance as described by two students:

We learned that we should communicate with everyone like they would among themselves. For example, if we go to a rural village with formal cloths or jeans they will have bad behavior beside us. They will feel bad towards us and wonder why we came with these clothes among their women and their children. . . We learned to treat them according to their own tradition.
Or when we are with our female classmates [in the field] they should observe the veil or cover themselves in a proper manner.

The second aspect students identified as challenging was failing to gain the residents trust so that they would consent to participate in their research. This challenge also frustrated the students as they attempted to photograph respondents. One female student observed:

It was like that they didn’t want us to take their photos and they were not letting us ever to take their photo. Else they were saying, “when you are taking photos you may trap us with some problem.” Then somehow we convinced them that really we are students, we have a project, we will never trap you with a problem. And via this information we could convince them to have an interview with us.

However, more concerning was residents’ lack of trust and fear that their research plans and intention to carry out field studies would put them in danger. One student explained that,

They feel danger or they can’t trust [us]. They are afraid that we will face them with a threat by using their data or making a case against them. These things are in our society.

After many failed attempts to convince the residents to interview them, some students convened with their fellow group members, and shared their challenges to come up with different approaches towards gaining their respondents’ consent to participate. Their solution was, as the guest teacher had previously instructed, to clearly state that they are students from BU who are conducting research in the community. As one student mentioned:

When we prepared the questionnaires, myself and two of my group members went to the stakeholders, local people. First, we were asking them questions about pollution of the Gholghola city environment and they were not answering and were saying that we are making problems for them. . . We decided to convince them correctly and with the language told them that we have come from the university and we have a project.

Students’ perspectives on learning outcomes

At the end of the SL course students were asked in focus groups and a reflective essay about their experiences in completing the course and what competencies they learned. Students
unanimously mentioned that communication skills were one of the most important research skills they gained through interactions with residents. The themes of respect for culture and respect-as-equality were an unexpected outcome in the students’ descriptions of their newly learned communication skills. Many students used words such as respect, manners, behavior, act, and treat as they described what constituted achieving good communication skills. Respect for culture was intertwined in students’ descriptions of having appropriately localized behavior when communicating with residents. Localized behavior included respecting oral and nonverbal communication customs such as appearance and dress (dressing conservatively), speaking in the local languages (using local dialects and accents), conversational customs (using honorifics such as “dear aunty” and “dear uncle”) and following other local customs (such as seeking advice from elders). Respecting intercultural etiquette was an integral part of communication skills that allowed students to establish relationships with residents and other stakeholders. For example, a student highlighted:

[We] learned methods of communication with stakeholders, people, community, [and] government. How to solve the problems that we faced during the project and establish good relations with people. Here we had to respect the views, patterns, [and] social relations that we must give importance too.

[I learned] how to talk with a soft neck (humbly). . . talk softly with a good behavior. . . and in their own language.

Students also expressed that they learned other interpersonal skills including listening, cooperating, sharing, and empathizing with other people’s views. The development of interpersonal skills was highly valued as contributing towards students’ respect-as-equality towards residents and peers and are summed up well by two students in the following remarks:

. . . we have to be respectful of the beliefs and customs of people. . . and listen to the [peoples’] circumstances and answers.
[I learned] to respect my colleagues, groupmates, and the people of the community during the questionnaires. Respecting the views and suggestions of group [members] and giving priority to the goals and their views. . . is very beneficial.

**Moment 3: Project planning and implementation**

The third moment relates the teacher’s classroom approach to prepare students for their project implementation and the student groups’ challenges in trying to gain the government’s support in their project. The moment occurred during the Project Planning and Project Implementation phases in the second year of the study. The Project Planning phase was designed to prepare the groups for their project implementation through the development of their action plans. Student groups were required to use their action plans for the following purposes, including: to describe group solutions to their issues based on research findings; to define group goals and objectives; to identify the stakeholders involved and their roles; to list all steps required to implement the project and team members’ responsibilities; to identify resources needed; to determine budget estimates; to identify potential risks; and to describe how they would evaluate the impact of their project. All student groups identified one or more government organizations as important stakeholders with which to partner collaboratively for their projects. Important stakeholders included the National Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Public Health, Department of Information and Culture, Ministry of Education, and municipality representatives.

To illustrate the benefits of involving government stakeholders in group projects one group (designated “Group Symbiosis” by its members) sought to improve the amenities and litter disposal at a public park in Bamyan Center (see Table 5.2). Their action plan included steps for the activities of hosting an environmental awareness event about the importance of public spaces. In addition, their action plan outlined plans for installing informational signs to inform the public
about the importance of keeping the site free of litter and installing park benches to provide extra seating areas for visitors. Members of Group Symbiosis had meetings with the government agencies responsible for managing the park to seek their advice, permission, and participation in the project.

In the remaining paragraphs in this section we present the moment by first describing the instructional approach towards preparing the students to implement their action plans. Following this, we share the challenges students encountered while trying to gain the government stakeholders’ support and participation in their project during the implementation phase. Finally, we report students’ perceptions of their values-based competencies gained because experiencing these challenges.

**Instructional approach**

At the beginning of this moment, the student groups were only a couple of weeks away from implementing their projects. The student groups were working to get their action plans developed, revised, presented, and approved by the teacher. At this stage of the SL course the students were to take full ownership of their projects and learning experience. The teacher transitioned from his role of a master to that of a facilitator, respecting the students’ freedom, independence, and decision-making. During a session when the students were presenting their action plans to the entire class, the teacher’s respect-as-autonomy towards his students was evident: “We leave you free for any innovation that you want to do during this project and put your energy and attention in this project.”

After giving the students permission to take full ownership of their project, the teacher had to inform the students of the responsibility they had to uphold as professionals representing the university in the public sphere. To uphold their professional reputation, the teacher stressed
the importance of having tactful communication with stakeholders. Tactful communication implied having self-respect and being accountable for their actions:

What we expect from you is that what you want to implement, or practice, must be very appropriate, [done] very well, and sincerely do things which are needed. As a student when you go to an area, you try and keep your status. You must raise your reputation. . . Like when you go to local schools and give speeches in front of school students, you speak as a student from the university.

This excerpt reflects the teacher’s high expectations for the students. He was both motivating and putting pressure on the students, while trusting them to represent the university in the public sphere for their first time. Reputation and behaving “sincerely” was a theme in his guidance towards helping the students develop self-respect and respect for others.

Finally, the teacher needed to reinforce his expectation for the students to respectfully communicate with the government stakeholders identified in their group’s action plan. The teacher thought it was necessary that the student groups invited government authorities to participate in their project implementation to raise their awareness about their cause. Failure to communicate and gain the government authorities support would mean that their projects went unnoticed:

For example, it doesn’t mean. . . that you go and simply install your garbage bins and benches and come back to your room. You try and you may invite stakeholders and one or two ambassadors from your relevant organizations. Talk to them so they can come to inaugurate it formally so that they come to know that this project was implemented by this group of students. . . so they will know who did it and why you did it.

Students’ experiences

The students appeared to agree with the teacher that involving government stakeholders was a critical element in the success of their project. However, students were nervous about approaching and communicating with government officials. For example, one student reported:
“At first, we had a lot of stress that they would not agree to talk to our team, [would] they accept or not accept.”

Building relationships and communicating with government stakeholders proved to be a challenge for most of the student groups. Many students expressed frustration with trying to gain government officials support and involvement in their projects. After multiple meetings with several government officials, one student expressed his frustration:

When we went to talk with them about collection of questionnaires or cooperation they did not care about us and counted no value towards us. When we went to their office they didn’t allow us to their office and also, they had a negative behavior towards us.

Many of the students expressed similar challenges with the government officials, leaving them discouraged and insecure about their communication skills.

We really got into trouble when we went to talk with the [government] sectors, and we did not know how to satisfy them, and we could not convince them. We had a lot of problems over time, and these things had already exacerbated our weakness.

The impact of the negative encounters that the students had with the government stakeholders left many students feeling a lack of respect-for-equality and self-worth. One student provided his interpretation of why the government stakeholders had negative reactions towards them:

In addition, umm, to what our team leader said. . . because this project was new for us, means they [the government stakeholders] did not think that the students of Bamyan will be able to accomplish a project because it was unique. They didn’t believe that we could ask them the questionnaires. They thought that we would waste their time, or for example, they just said, “we don’t implement that”. . . They didn’t value us.

Given that this course was the first of its kind at BU, it is not surprising that the government officials and community members in general appeared not to have much confidence in the student’s ability to successfully complete their projects or investment in assisting them.
Another challenge the students faced when attempting to gain the government stakeholders’ support was due to the students’ lack of awareness of formal government processes and procedures. Respect for cultural institutional policies, emerged as an attitude or value that the students did not initially support. According to government policies, a formal letter, signed by the requesting institution or group is required to start the approval process for any authorization or collaboration. For example, it is common bureaucratic procedure for the government to require formal invitations for their employees to participate in public events, and a project proposal letter is required before there can be approval of activities or events on government land or facilities. In one case a student, after finally recognizing the requirement for a project proposal letter took one to the municipal government office. However, this student learned that the letter was not official:

Here I took the letter to the municipality agency, and when they opened our letter it was not signed. They shouted at us “why are you coming from an academic place with a wrong letter” and said it is a shame on you, and this was our weakness of communication.

Although the teacher informed the students that he would write the students a letter on behalf of the university, the students thought that because they were students they should be exempt from respecting government policies. The following quote from a student highlights the students’ many failed attempts at defying the government procedures:

The only thing that always created a problem for us was. . . when we were going from the university we had to have a letter with us. At first we faced this problem with public health with them asking “why didn’t you coordinated with us when you were coming?” And the same [happened] when we went to the municipality. The same problem was there and we [thought we] had the ability to convince them that we are students and must implement a project and don't need a letter at all.
Students’ perspectives on learning outcomes

According to the students, overcoming the challenges faced while engaging with the government also meant learning important values-based outcomes. For many students their encounters with the government stakeholders provided them with a deeply meaningful “first-time” experience. Students reflected that collaborating as a team to address the challenges they faced was an important learning outcome. For example, a student articulated:

I, myself, had no experience before. . . For the first time, there was no particular reason why we would definitely say that [our actions] would be inappropriate. We also tried to work with each other in partnership. . . For the first time, we were experiencing a project that we actually did. For example, when we went to an office we did not understand what was written in our letter. We did not do it before. When we went from the office, for example, he said that it was a problem.

Furthermore, students indicated that working effectively as a team was deeply connected to developing their communication skills, self-respect, and confidence. When students set out to address the challenges they initially faced when trying to gain the government stakeholders’ approval and participation in their project, they broadened their sense of awareness of institutional norms and subtleties in their society. Students voiced that they learned how to communicate with their government stakeholders by showing respect for culture (institutional norms) to gain their collaboration. For example, a student mentioned: “We learned how to work with the Department of Information and Culture. . . and learned how to communicate with them.” Another student explained: “we understood when we take a letter to some agency it should have our stamp and signature.” Through the process of learning how to communicate with government stakeholders, students’ self-respect and confidence in their abilities increased. For example, a student reflected, “before this project we had no confidence in ourselves that we can do any activity in this part. After this course I knew that I can do other projects like this project. In short, this course increased my self-confidence.” Another student articulated: “During
this course we understood that nothing is impossible. And this project was very good for us to make our fear go away and in future we can do an activity with open arms.”

Finally, most of the students expressed that the course built their citizenship values. Citizenship values were tied to students gaining self-respect (respect-as-autonomy) in their ability to collaborate with their stakeholders. For example:

. . . I got experience and became interested in being able to go and communicate with the organizations and local society. . . I [learned]. . . how I can serve the people.

This project persuaded me and the experience that we learned through this course made me interested. . . to continue my education and serve my people as much as I can.

Our goal is to be an example for our community. And people of our community can learn from us that we can take our community towards development. . . My goal is to continue my education and . . . to be an active member of my community that people can trust.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group (year)</th>
<th>Issue/problem</th>
<th>Project description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Community stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Thought (2016)</td>
<td>Environmental pollution in Bamyan Bazaar</td>
<td>Installed outdoor waste bins in strategic locations in the Bazaar in collaboration with the Municipality; Produced an informational waste management poster campaign; Produced and aired a radio program informing the public on the importance of waste management for tourism development on a local radio station</td>
<td>Bamyan Bazaar</td>
<td>Municipality, National Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Public Health, and residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Message (2016)</td>
<td>Concerns with the proposed government plan to relocate residents living in and around the Bamyan World Heritage Site; lack of awareness of the residents effected by the proposed government plan on the importance of cultural heritage sites</td>
<td>Facilitated meetings with mullahs (religious leaders) and shuras (community leaders) to inform and educate the residents effected by the government relocation plan about the importance of cultural heritage sites in a way that was personally meaningful and beneficial to them; organized school awareness programs on the importance of protecting cultural heritage sites targeting the students whose families are effected by the relocation plan; installed information signs and posters in the communities illustrating the importance of their cultural heritage.</td>
<td>Mosques, schools, and Shura offices, in Sayed Abad and Shah Pol communities</td>
<td>Department of Information and Culture, UNESCO, National Environmental Protection Agency, Municipality; Department of Urban Development; schools, Mullahs, Shuras, and residents living in and around the Bamyan World Heritage site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Tomorrow (2016)</td>
<td>Negative impacts of poor hygiene and sanitation on health and tourism</td>
<td>Conducted an information and awareness campaign on the importance of hygiene and sanitation in line with traditional beliefs and economic challenges; distributed brochures and posters at schools, mosques, and adult education centers.</td>
<td>Schools, mosques, and adult education centers in Bamyan Center</td>
<td>Bamyan Provincial Hospital, local NGOs, schools, adult education centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Experts (2016)</td>
<td>Lack of public awareness on protecting antiquities and cultural attractions</td>
<td>Hosted a workshop at BU and speeches at primary and secondary schools on the importance of preserving antiquities and cultural attractions in Bamyan</td>
<td>BU and public schools in Bamyan Center</td>
<td>Department of Information and Culture, Afghan Tour, National Environmental Protection Agency, Mayor's Office, and residents in Bamyan Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team A (2017)</td>
<td>Environmental impacts on health and Bamyan’s destination image</td>
<td>Organized environmental education programs at primary and secondary schools in Bamyan Center that identified environmental challenges and possible solutions</td>
<td>Religious, public, and private schools in Bamyan Center</td>
<td>Municipality, Department of Public Health, Department of Environment, Department of Education, and schools in Bamyan Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team B (2017)</td>
<td>Issues of waste management and environmental protection at cultural heritage sites</td>
<td>Raised public awareness on the importance of environmental protection at cultural heritage sites for economic growth and attracting tourists through radio broadcasts; designed and installed metal waste bins and information signs at Ghogola City then and hosted a waste clean-up event there</td>
<td>Ghogola City (cultural heritage site)</td>
<td>Department of Information and Culture, Municipality, National Environmental Protection Agency, UNESCO, and residents near Ghogola City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbiosis (2017)</td>
<td>Lack of environmental protection and amenities at the public Peace Park</td>
<td>Installed environmental signs and benches at the public Peace Park; hosted an outdoor event at the Peace Park with the National Environmental Protection Agency on the importance of public parks</td>
<td>Peace Park in Bamyan Center</td>
<td>National Environmental Protection Agency, Municipality, Mayor’s office, and residents in Bamyan Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team D (2017)</td>
<td>Threats to cultural heritage sites including graffiti and trampling by tourists and local residents</td>
<td>Installed three information signs in at the entry of the Buddhas and Ghogola City to guide tourists on ways to reduce visitor pressure, the text written in English and Dari languages; hosted an event with the Department of Information and Culture to promote the responsibility of preserving cultural heritage site shared by tourists and local residents</td>
<td>Bamiyan World Heritage site</td>
<td>Department of Information and Culture, UNESCO, tourists, and residents in Bamyan Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

In this chapter we have focused on the instructional approach and students’ learning experiences and values-based outcomes as culturally constructed in a SL course for undergraduate tourism students in Bamyan, Afghanistan. This study is the first one to be undertaken in an Afghani university that critically examined the practice and outcomes of
student-centered instruction and service learning in a setting where students were only familiar with formal teaching methods. The teachers influence on classroom and student-community interactions and the students perceived learning outcomes provided several interesting insights and surprises for teaching values-based competencies in conflict-affected contexts. The findings suggest that overall the teachers’ instructional modalities and students’ experiences in their teams and out in the community fostered students learning values-based outcomes tied to respect. In this section we present a collective synthesis of the instructional practices that enabled students to learn respect-as-autonomy, respect-as-equality, and respect for culture. Then we discuss the implications of SL for building relationships within the community based on societal values of respect.

One of the impacts of the instructional approach was how the teacher’s respect-for-autonomy built students intrinsic motivation, self-respect, and citizenship values. During the course the teacher transitioned his traditional role of authority to the role of facilitator and emphasized respect-as-autonomy towards his students; he encouraged them to work in teams, select and conduct their own research, and implement their projects on their own. At the beginning of the SL course students were motivated by extrinsic factors of earning a good grade and the social motivation of seeking approval from the teacher (see moment 2). As the course continued, the third-year students experienced freedom and autonomy in their academic program for the first time, which resulted in the motivation to pursue their own team goals and reflect positively on their values-based competencies learned. With freedom came certain expectations from the teacher; as described in moment 3, he expected the students to “sincerely” represent the university and maintain its image when out in the community. This encouragement led students to build their own self-respect in terms of how they behaved in the public sphere. Having self-
respect and commitment to their autonomous action further encouraged students to develop inner motivation as they took ownership of their learning process and realized the benefits of the competencies they were learning. By the end of the course students reflected that they wanted to contribute as part of a collaborative team, hone new skills, and have a positive impact on society, all examples of intrinsic motivation. O’Grady (2015) described how the relationship of autonomy and self-respect is linked to accountability and accepting responsibility for one’s actions while realizing that actions have consequences. The impact of the teacher’s transition to the role of facilitator on students’ motivation and citizenship values is profound in an education system in which students compete for recognition in academic programs solely on academic marks, rather than metrics that might measure impact and contribution.

The three moments also showed the value that respect-as-equality had in nurturing students’ teamwork skills. As demonstrated in moment 1, this was the first course in the students’ academic program where they were required to actively engage in class discussions and work closely together in a group format. During the first moment, the teacher was strict and intolerant towards disrespectful behavior in his classroom. Through the teacher pointing out to the whole class inappropriate behavior among students, the students learned to respect their classmates’ values in class discussions and to be part of a collaborative team. By the second moment the teacher’s controlled and disciplined approach changed once the students’ teamwork skills matured, and they began to display respect-as-equality towards each other. Many of the students expressed that one of the most important values they learned was teamwork and respect for each other. The students’ expression of these values developed further as they learned to respect ‘others’ in their community. Similarly, Trigos-Carrilo et al.’s (2020) study assessing the impacts of SL on university students in conflict-affected Colombia revealed that through group
reflections and community interactions students developed respect and curiosity towards community stakeholders. The students understood “that effective partnership[s]... require the recognition of the others’ abilities and knowledge” (p. 8). In a formal academic setting where students have not had experience working in groups, a specific focus on teamwork skills and respect-as-equality is a foundational practice for students to excel in other SL objectives.

Respect for culture also influenced students’ learning outcomes. By the first half of the course students were able to work independently in groups, but they struggled to communicate with the broader community. As demonstrated in moment 2 and 3, the teacher and guest teacher tried to prepare the students for communicating effectively with their stakeholders. They modeled and communicated to the students what constituted respectful behavior towards different cultures and institutional processes. Students initially failed to follow their teacher and guest teacher’s advice regarding cultural norms and institutional policies in society and as a result acted disrespectfully towards their stakeholders. It was not until the students reconvened with each other after failing to gain their community and government stakeholders’ trust and participation that they learned through application how to socialize and communicate through displaying respect for culture.

Displaying respect for culture led students to improve their communication and interpersonal skills, establish functional community relationships, and enhanced their citizenship values.

By examining the experiences of the teachers and students in a SL course, we demonstrated that SL is an appropriate and well-received pedagogy in the context of the HE restructuring process in Bamyan, Afghanistan and potentially for other academic institutions across Afghanistan. We showed how the teachers and students shaped the course and defined their own values-based learning outcomes based on multiple forms of respect across their cultures and institutions. The students gained communication, interpersonal, teamwork, and
citizenship skills as well as core values of respect. These values-based outcomes were strongly tied to the themes of respect for autonomy, equality, and culture.

By extension, the research presents one example of the potential that SL can have in building and restoring trusting relationships between HE and communities centered around cultural values of respect in conflict-affected Afghanistan. The students, with the guidance of their teachers, mitigated social distrust along dividing ethnic, gender, religious, and class identities through displaying respect-as-equality and respect for culture. Holland’s (2000) study in Albania demonstrates the challenges of rebuilding trust in war-torn societies and emphasizes the importance of reciprocity and understanding diverse identities in each community. The outcomes of the SL course showed how universities can “de-sensitize the fears caused by the ‘Others’” and facilitate transformational social interactions that can contribute to development and peacebuilding processes (Sahar & Kaunart, 2020, p. 21)

Since the pilot year of this study, the SL course has continued as a capstone course for students in the Department of Tourism at BU. Faculty in the Department of Tourism have taught six iterations of the course based on feedback from the initial teaching with over 300 students and community engagement through 24 different projects. Based on our examination of the SL course and discussions with the faculty who are continuing to refine and deliver the course, the course has proved to be the most impactful course in the students’ academic program for teaching students’ values-based competencies. The impact on students emphasizes the need for expanding SL pedagogy in the curriculum as well as within other academic programs at BU. If the program were to be tailored for adoption in other faculties at BU, the number of students and community members impacted by SL could potentially extend and strengthen higher education-community relationships for fostering regional development in Bamyan Province.
To add depth to the implications of SL on teachers, students, and communities in Afghanistan some additional research can broaden and expand how SL can be applied more widely. First, this study only focused on examining the impacts of the SL course from the teachers’ and students’ perspectives. Future research should focus on the experience of the community stakeholders involved in the processes. A longitudinal study would also shed light on the potential for the SL model to further support building relationships founded on trust, respect, and multi-culturalism between the HE sector and communities. Exploring what the students do after the SL experience would also reveal the long-term impacts and benefits on their professional and civic roles. Secondly, this study was limited to assessing SL at one, predominantly Hazara-affiliated institution in a relatively secure region. Given Afghanistan’s culturally and ethnically diverse regions that range from secure to a state of active and ongoing conflict, researching how teachers and students navigate the themes of respect at other campuses and in other communities would be imperative to understanding the feasibility and implications of SL at various points in the transition from conflict to peace. However, it may be necessary to explore adapted SL models in more conservative cultures and insecure regions to ensure the pedagogy is culturally appropriate and teachers, students, and community members safety is prioritized. Finally, future research should heighten understanding of other experimental learning approaches that incorporate a high cultural sensitivity to teachers’ and students’ needs and in conformity with the host culture’s cultural and religious values.
References


*Journal of Business Ethics, 15*(1), 5-19.
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation was to produce a theoretically-framed and practically informed grounded analysis of effective practices for teaching sustainability and values-based outcomes in tourism higher education in Bamyan, Afghanistan. In laying out this research goal, I assessed tourism stakeholders’ different perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development and explored the impacts of a service learning (SL) course on teaching tourism students sustainability and values-based outcomes at BU. This dissertation included four data chapters (Ch 2-5) with different research questions while maintaining interconnected themes aligned with Scheyvens and Biddulph’s (2018) inclusive tourism framework (see Figure 1.1). This concluding chapter summarizes the outcomes of the research following three interconnected themes: 1) sustainability values of inclusive tourism, 2) building and restoring trusting relationships, and 3) strong conceptualizations of sustainability.

Sustainability values of inclusive tourism

This study revealed inclusivity as an important value for the tourism sector and for academic programming in tourism higher education in Bamyan, Afghanistan. In Chapter 2, I demonstrated that tourism stakeholders’ perceived inclusivity as an important component of sustainable tourism development in Bamyan centered on the four themes of hospitality, gender empowerment, cultural heritage, and nature. First, for hospitality, tourism stakeholders wanted to showcase their hospitality to tourists based on their values of respect, cultural acceptance, equality, and peace. They identified their cultural codes of hospitality as a method to promote tourism through word-of-mouth marketing. Additionally, many of the Hazara stakeholders
viewed their hospitality as a tool to help dismantle systemic discrimination and promote ethnic equality. Many of the Hazara tourism stakeholders believed that ethnic and religious discrimination could be overcome by sharing their hospitality and culture with domestic tourists from other ethnic groups. Second, for gender empowerment, tourism was perceived as an important economic and social outcome for women. For example, tourism stakeholders perceived women’s economic autonomy, self-determination, acceptance in the workplace, and participation in recreation as desirable inclusivity outcomes for sustainable tourism development. Third, in regards to cultural heritage and nature, tourism stakeholders articulated how sharing the authenticity and beauty of their local culture, built heritage, and natural environment with tourists was a way to self-represent and promote their sense of place. In sum, these three themes illustrated tourism stakeholders’ values towards inclusive tourism as described in Scheyvens and Biddulph’s (2018) framework. These observations present a compelling argument that a bottom-up approach to tourism planning in Bamyan can contribute to inclusive tourism and broader peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan.

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I described how the design of the SL course enabled tourism students to gain sustainability and values-based outcomes related to inclusivity (e.g. equality, cultural humility, and respect). The SL course required students to collectively specify differences in values among different stakeholders and to negotiate courses of action (see Table 3.3 in Ch 3). Students articulated that the challenging processes of engaging with their community stakeholders fostered building their communication, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. These were foundational skills for emphasizing respect for ‘others’ in their community and for achieving sustainability competencies that lead towards sustainability problem solving. Students used phrases and words such as “establishing national unity”, “integrity between
people”, “mutual acceptance”, and “cultural behavior” to demonstrate their learned values of equality and cultural humility. Based on the students’ and tourism stakeholders’ values of inclusivity, findings suggest that there is strong evidence for teaching values-based competencies in tourism higher education programs in Bamyan in line with Scheyvens and Biddulph’s (2018) framework of inclusive tourism. Furthermore, findings specifically expand on component six of Scheyvens and Biddulph’s (2018) framework by not only “encouraging learning, exchange and mutually beneficial relationships which promote understanding and respect between ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’” (p. 594), but also among diverse tourism stakeholders (e.g. academia, government residents, etc.).

The importance of inclusivity for sustainable tourism development and higher education in Bamyan align with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), specifically Goal 16 (SDG16). The goal of SDG16 is to ‘promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.’ The findings in Chapters 2 through 5 add further scholarship to Milton’s (2021) study identifying how higher education can contribute to SDG16 in fragile and conflict-affected contexts through curricula, research, and external engagement. Milton challenges the perceptions that there are too many barriers for higher education to contribute to SDG16 in fragile and conflict states by providing examples of how higher education communities have contributed towards building peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. This dissertation finds further circumstances where Milton’s study’s assertions are held.

**Building and restoring trusting relationships**

Consistent with the important role that higher education can play in situations of conflict (Milton, 2021), in Chapters 4 and 5 I showed how BU can engage students and community
members in building and restoring relationships of trust and respect. During the SL course, the
students mitigated social distrust along divided ethnic, gender, religious, and class identities
through emphasizing respect-as-equality and respect for culture. The students had to desensitize
some of their community stakeholders’ fears stemming from a history of conflict. They also had
to build their stakeholders’ confidence in their abilities to collaboratively design and implement a
project. Clearly communicating their research intent, communicating in a culturally respectful
manner through the appropriate channels, and building rapport was critical to gaining their
stakeholders trust and collaboration.

Importantly, results of this study point to the strengths of incorporating a holistic and
integrated set of sustainability competencies in SL (Wiek et al., 2011; Wiek et al., 2015). Similarly, previous studies have highlighted the potential for SL to foster dialogues and
reconciliation between community stakeholders in war-torn societies through teaching students
cultural humility (Trigos-Carrillo et al., 2020). The SL model design goes beyond teaching
cultural humility and integrates students’ acquisition of the key sustainability competencies that
can further enhance transformational social interactions. My findings point to the power of
teaching sustainability through SL in a conflict-affected context. This research provides one
example of how higher education can contribute to “statebuilding and peacebuilding through
dismantling discriminatory institutions, empowering the communities, mitigating inequalities,
and creating arenas for critical thinking. . . as well as constructing a shared future (Sahar &

**Strong conceptualization of sustainability**

The SL course engaged students in a pedagogy that allowed them to define sustainability
according to their own experiences (Ch 3, 4, & 5) and resulted in strong conceptualizations of
sustainability that aligned with the tourism stakeholders’ goals of sustainable tourism development (Ch 2). The SL activities required student groups to research the current community needs, positions, and interests around sustainability issues and to continuously engage their tourism stakeholders in the preparation and implementation phases of the course (Ch 3). Students demonstrated that they learned sustainability skills and attitudes related to cultural humility, respect, social responsibility, and other community needs. These conceptualizations supported alignment with the tourism stakeholders’ concepts of inclusivity. To date sustainability has not been widely integrated into university programs in Afghanistan. My findings have shown how SL is an innovative and effective approach for teaching strong conceptualizations of sustainability in higher education programs.

My findings also showed how building students’ strong conceptualization of sustainability, paired with community engagement and social action, empowered students to express active citizenship values that extended beyond the course. For example, many students expressed a sense of connection to the community and set future goals to serve their community (Ch 4). Furthermore, the students, through building their sustainability competencies, also developed self-respect and confidence in their abilities. This outcome is important, given that the students’ prior experience was predominantly with the formal education model that is prevalent across the higher education system in Afghanistan is based on passive learning. In this study, students embraced a new form of learning that demonstrated their engagement potential despite having never worked in team, leadership, or community-engaged project roles. SL could enrich the educational process, providing new pedagogical approaches to these challenging conflict-affected development contexts, in areas such as self-discovery, creativity, community engagement, problem-solving, and reflective dialogue.
Future research

The primary findings suggest several opportunities for further areas of research. These opportunities are divided into three substantive concerns and include the following: 1) inclusive and sustainable tourism development, 2) pedagogical approaches towards teaching sustainability, and 3) impacts of SL on teachers and communities.

Inclusive and sustainable tourism development

In Chapter 2, I assessed tourism stakeholders’ perceptions of inclusive and sustainable tourism development. This research represented tourism businesses and a small sample of academics, aid organization managers, and government leaders in Bamyan Province. I did not include religious leaders (Mullahs) and residents not directly connected to the tourism industry. These groups are also impacted by the changes that tourism creates and may have different attitudes and levels of support for tourism. Including their perceptions in future studies would yield a better understanding of the complex relationship between religion, tourism, and opportunities for sustainable tourism development (e.g. religious tourism or pilgrimage).

Additionally, it would be worthwhile to take a more focused look at how tourism can support ethnic equality, national identity, and gender empowerment in Bamyan. For example, further research could investigate how local tourism initiatives in Bamyan either positively or negatively contribute to inclusivity and achieving SDG16. Such research is vital for tourism planning and for directing aid and development resources which can further support inclusive and sustainable tourism development objectives in Afghanistan.

Pedagogical approaches towards teaching sustainability

The 2021 academic year is the sixth in which the SL course has been taught in the Department of Tourism at BU. One valuable research effort would be to assess the instructional...
modifications and new iterations to the course design introduced by BU instructors, then evaluate the impacts on students’ learning outcomes. This would highlight the most influential activities in the SL course and identify the learning outcomes that teachers see as most beneficial to students’ academic development. Refinements made in light of these findings would assist with defining more effective SL approaches in Afghanistan.

Future studies investigating how tourism graduates are applying the sustainability competencies learned during the SL course in professional and civic settings would help to illuminate the needs in curriculum development. Questions to investigate could include: Are tourism graduates more likely to gain employment in the tourism sector after taking this course? What are graduates’ perceptions of the contributions SL made to their professional development? How are graduates applying the competencies learned during the course in professional and civic settings? The answers to these questions would assist in determining if the tourism program is meeting the needs of the tourism sector and what role SL plays in meeting those needs.

Moreover, this SL course is just one pedagogical approach towards teaching sustainability in a tourism higher education program in a conflict-affected context. Other experiential pedagogical approaches for teaching sustainability such as internships, case studies, applied research projects, and field experiences are worth exploring to identify ways to integrate sustainability across courses in the tourism curriculum.

**Impact of SL on the teachers and community**

This SL course was the first to be designed and implemented in Afghanistan. Its focus was on assessing the impacts on students. However, future research to explore the impacts on the teachers would compliment this study. Eight teachers at BU have been trained to facilitate the SL course. Research exploring teachers’ adoption of SL philosophies (i.e. student-centered, place-
based, project-based learning, etc.) in the other courses they teach could discover interesting systematic synergies. Research including viewpoints of their relationships with students in other courses and any dynamic changes in those relationships would bear fruit as well.

Lastly, analysis could be undertaken to explore the impact of the SL course perceived by the community stakeholders. Such an analysis would illuminate student-community interactions, social trust building, and societal confidence in higher education. This type of study would greatly contribute to the limited research on SL in conflict-affected contexts and the potential for SL to support peacebuilding and stabilization efforts.

A personal reflection

On a macro-level with the current deteriorating security situation and the coronavirus pandemic, strong uncertainty for the future expansion of the tourism sector in Bamyan remains. Recent attacks across the country targeting schools, religious events, wedding ceremonies, and a maternity ward has many Afghan residents in fear of their future. Recently, my friends and colleagues in Bamyan have been posting on social media with the hashtag #StopHazaraGenocide, and some Hazara activists are labeling the recent killings of Hazaras in Afghanistan as a genocide. While it may be argued that international tourism is not a realistic industry for this area given the recent geopolitical and internal events, ongoing locally organized tourism initiatives and cultural events in Bamyan reassure that tourism will continue to have a domestic market. The local tourism stakeholders’ perseverance and determination is significant in a fragile tourism economy. Importantly, local tourism stakeholders see tourism and education as a tool towards social change.

Reflecting on my dissertation’s theoretical framework of inclusive tourism, I note the tourism stakeholders’ inclusive hospitality and vision for tourism to serve as a tool for building
inter-ethnic relations directly speaks to the processes of constitutional development and reform. During a recent conference in Bamyan, the Vice Chancellor of BU highlighted the importance of building ethnic unity in society and of strengthening education to empower society. He also stated that promoting ethnic unity and strengthening education are direct ways to counter terrorism. Moreover, supporting the Vice Chancellor’s claim, a recent article in *The New York Times*, highlighted how education is a slow yet cost-effective tool to defeat terrorism and extremism (Kristof, 2021). The article provides a comparison of the cost of deploying one U.S. soldier in Afghanistan for one year, to the equal cost of establishing and funding 20 schools. For the SL course at BU, one of my goals was to ensure the financial sustainability of the program. Each group of students saw their projects implemented for just 200 USD. While my findings in this dissertation highlighted the opportunities for SL and inclusive tourism in Bamyan to contribute to peacebuilding efforts, the low-cost SL program demonstrated that change can be made in small ways through the integration of academic work with community engagement.
References


Interview questions for tourism industry

Facesheet
Interviewees will be asked to answer a close ended facesheet describing demographic information either before or after the interview. This will include age, gender, education, job position, number of years they have lived in Bamyan, number of years they have worked for the organization/company.

Verbal Confidentiality Agreement
The interview is completely voluntary and you can stop or skip any questions that you do not want to answer at any time.

The translator and I are the only ones who will have access to the recording. I will not share it with my colleagues, anyone from your organization, or anyone else.

I will remove all names and identifying information from the transcript or any quotes I might use.

Your honesty, insight, and participation in this interview will be useful for understanding local visions for tourism development in Bamyan and how these views can be integrated into the tourism curriculum at Bamyan University.

Questions
1. Tell me about living here.
2. Tell me how Bamyan has changed in the last 10 years?
(probe) Are these changes positive? Why?

3. How would you like to see Bamyan province develop in the future?

4. What would you like other visitors/tourists/guests coming to here to know about Bamyan?

   (probe) What would you like visitors to do and see?

   (probe) What is the one thing that you would like visitors to remember about Bamyan?

5. What kinds of visitors do you want to come to Bamyan?

6. What are your organization’s goals or vision for tourism development?

   (probe) How can those goals be achieved?

7. What actions or strategies would you like to see for tourism development in Bamyan?

**Student focus group discussions**

*Facesheet:*

Students will be asked to fill out a close ended facesheet prior to the focus group discussion to better understand their backgrounds. This may include age, year of study, where they are from, leadership roles in the CSL course, etc.

*Verbal Confidentiality Agreement*

The focus group is completely voluntary and you can stop or skip any questions that you do not want to answer at any time. Your decision to stop or skip some questions will not affect your grade in this course or your future relationship with Bamyan University.
The translator and I are the only ones who will have access to the recording. I will not share it with your teachers, other students, or anyone else.

I will remove all names and identifying information from the transcript or any quotes I might use.

Your honesty, insight, and participation in this focus group will be useful for identifying what worked in the program, what needs improvement, and how we can make the program better for students in the future.

Questions

1. What did you like about the community service learning course?
2. What responsibilities did you have during this course?
   (probe) Did you like your leadership role?
   (probe) Why did you volunteer for that activity/role?
3. What skills or knowledge did you learn during this course?
   (Probe) How will those skills help you in the future?
4. What were some of the challenges you faced during the course?
   (Probe) Why do you think those challenges occurred?
   (Probe) How did you address those challenges?
   (Probe) Looking back, how would you address those challenges differently in the future?
   (Probe) Did you face any gender challenges?
5. How can the course be improved?
6. As we close, is there anything else you want to share?
**Student reflection prompt**

This is your final assignment and will be worth 40 points. Write a 5-8 page double spaced paper reflecting on your feelings, experience, and what you have learned throughout the course.

Consider the following questions to help guide your reflection. The questions can be answered in any order. Please include your name, gender, year of study, and age on your assignment.

*Backward-looking*

1. What parts of the community service learning course did you particularly like? Dislike? Why?
2. What problems did you encounter during this project? How did you solve them?

*Inward-looking*

3. What did you learn about yourself through this course?
4. In what ways do you think this course helped you improve your professional skills?

*Outward-looking*

5. What is the one thing you particularly want people to learn from your project?

*Forward-looking*

6. What is one goal that you would like to set for yourself in the future?
APPENDIX B

Environmental Citizenship through Applied Community Service Learning: Course Curriculum

Corresponding publication:

Introduction

Community Service Learning (CSL) is a philosophy and practice developed out of the education and environmental movement in the 1960’s and 1970’s. When it was recognized that traditional teaching methods were failing in many countries, education started to take a shift towards practical, student-centered approaches such as CSL (Iverson & Espenschied-Reilly, 2010). Generally, CSL is a form of experiential learning that entails planning, action, and reflection through applied social engagement (Phillipson-Mower & Adams, 2010). It aims to benefit the students, teachers, and the recipients of the service.

CSL pedagogy has strong interlinks with sustainability education and place-based education and has been adopted in many higher education curriculums worldwide. A wide range of disciplines such as business, engineering, sociology, tourism, environmental studies, etc. have integrated CSL pedagogy. CSL within the university context can contribute towards the “development of student, faculty, university, and community interactions and capacity in a progressive and transformative manner” (Levkoe et al., 2014, p. 80). The way that transformation occurs is of interest for better defining CSL not as a ‘course based’ or ‘credit bearing’ educational experience, but as a transformative educational experience for the student, teacher, and the community. Hatziconstantis and Kolympari (2016, p. 183) explain that
“learning no longer limited to the academic content of the course, but is influenced by experiential and emotional elements.” Many studies have suggested that CSL contributes to students gaining skills in leadership, decision making, communication, civic responsibility, and critical citizenship. Positive impacts are also found in students’ ability to bridge theory and disciplinary practice (Jenkins & Sheehy, 2011; James & Iverson, 2009; Bringer & Hatcher, 1995).

CSL offers issue analysis models which provide a conceptual framework to move students into action around an environmental issue. This CSL course begins by incorporating place-based education techniques to have students learn about their sense of place and explore beliefs and values on environmental issues. Next, students identify an environmental issue related to their field of study and form research questions. The issue analysis technique involves students identifying the players and their positions, beliefs, and values around the issue. The next phase involves students collecting information to investigate the issue and interpreting the results. The following phase is citizenship action where students develop an action plan to implement. The last stage of CSL promotes sharing of lessons learned and celebration. Traditional education settings rarely practice celebration, but CSL shows it to play an important role in students’ and community learning objectives. Levkoe et al. (2014, p. 72) believes that for “civic engagement to succeed, individuals need to move from a focus on self to a focus on community and others.” Celebrations encourage students to focus less on personal gain and instead share experiences and lessons learned as being part of a bigger connected system.

Vision
This course seeks to advance innovation in teaching, learning, and action within school systems – based on local contexts and cultures – for students and communities to create and maintain a more sustainable and peaceful environment.

**Mission**

To empower university students to design their own environmental service project in their local community and develop exceptional leadership, citizenship, and post-graduate employment competencies.

**Goals**

We seek to make the curriculum national in scope and applicable for all higher education departments in Afghanistan who wish to incorporate environmental citizenship and community service learning into their curriculum models or as extra-curricular activities. The main learning goals of this course are to have students develop the following sustainability competencies (adapted from Tilbury, Crawley, and Berry, 2004):

- **Critical thinking/Futures thinking**: critical, creative and futures thinking skills to develop alternative and innovative solutions to sustainability issues
- **Actioning (change)**: research and action-oriented skills needed to motivate and manage change towards sustainability
- **Stakeholder engagement**: interpersonal and intercultural skills needed to understand relationships amongst various stakeholders; ability to openly communicate between workforce, government, community, and legislators
- **Problem solving**: engaging with real life problems; developing confidence and skills to deal with uncertainty
- **Systems thinking**: understanding the complexity of sustainability and how it is
locally based, but also globally linked

**An Interdisciplinary Model**

This community service learning course is an interdisciplinary curriculum that empowers students to develop sustainability competencies through a 5-step curriculum model:

1. *Exploration of ethics and values*: Students explore their sense of place and how sense of place influences community members’ social and environmental ethical decisions in Bamyan.
2. *Sustainability inquiry*: Student groups select a tourism-focused sustainability issue that they want to improve and research the issues in their community.
3. *Project planning*: Student groups develop an action plan (proposal) to improve the tourism-focused sustainability issue in their community.
4. *Community engagement*: Student groups engage community stakeholders in implementing their action plan.
5. *Reflection and celebration*: Students, teachers, and community stakeholders reflect and celebrate the outcomes of the project.

**Teaching Approach**

**Teaching Philosophy**

In this course students are required to work together in teams, hold different leadership responsibilities, and coordinate with outside experts and community members. Students research, plan, and implement an environmental project related to their field of study based on time, budget, and resources available. As a pedagogy, the teachers take on the role of facilitator and collaborator with the students in setting specific targets. As a philosophy, CSL encourages
experiential learning, critical theory, and multiculturalism by which teachers, students, and the community create their own educational spaces for learning.

**Three main teaching philosophies:**

4. *Experimental*: Students learn career skills, processes of project planning, and environmental citizenship through real life experiences.

5. *Critical theory*: Teachers provide forums for student reflective learning while students analyze and mediate their own processes for learning.

6. *Multiculturalism*: The curriculum fosters equal participation across gender and multicultural environments while engaging students in diverse social environments in their communities. The curriculum is also adaptable to local needs and promotes sensitivity to cultures and different beliefs.

**Teaching Methods**

Choosing instructional strategies that focus on students “doing” something with the information they learn rather than simply “knowing” is important for enhancing learning retention rate. The Learning Pyramid (Figure Apx 1, below) shows percentage of learner recall according to different methods of teaching. The first four levels (lecture, reading, audio visual, and demonstration) are passive learning methods, which are grounded in traditional instruction. The bottom three levels (discussion group, practice by doing, and teaching others) are active learning methods, implying that students participate as autonomous learners, which result in higher retention of learning.
Teaching Approach

This curriculum is divided into five units with one to three activities in each unit. Each unit has overall goals. Each activity has an outline, learning objectives, key discussion points, teaching resources, and steps for running the activity (See Table Apx 1). Some activities have recommended readings and methods for assessment. Many of the activities require preparatory work, so it is important for the teachers to review the activities in advance.
Table Apx 1 Activity components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>Provides teachers an overall plan for the activity with background information regarding the activity topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Objectives</td>
<td>Learning objectives are specific and will measure what the students will be able to do at the end of the activity. Begin by stating objectives at the start of each unit. During class discussions, group work, and student assignments refer to the learning objectives to test students’ knowledge and skills. Mid-term and final exams or assignments should also be designed based on these learning objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Discussion Points</td>
<td>Key questions related to the learning objectives are provided to help teachers facilitate class discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Resources</td>
<td>A list of teaching resources for instructing the module are provided, including videos, resource sheets, and student handouts. These materials can be found in soft copy on the USB accompanying this course booklet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Guidance</td>
<td>A step-by-step guidance on how to instruct the activity. Teachers may adjust the time allocation for each step, however it is recommended that the teachers do not take more than 30 minutes of class time for lectures and interactively engage students in class and group activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Reading</td>
<td>Essential readings to provide teachers and students with a scholarly introduction to the unit and activity topic. Readings can be provided to students before each class session so students are sufficiently prepared to engage in group discussions and activities. These are available on the USB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Summative and formative evaluation methods are provided at the end of activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is recommended that teachers use the Unit Reflection and Revision Form the first time they deliver the units. Teachers should note any challenges encountered during the delivery of the units and ways they adapted the instruction. Teachers should record this information immediately after delivering each class activity and keep a record of this information for future delivery of the course.

**Assessment**

Throughout this course, assessments are used to evaluate students’ and teachers’ performance as well as the effectiveness of the overall course through qualitative and
quantitative tools. There are two forms of assessment laid out in this curriculum: summative and formative. Summative assessments use measurable evaluation tools in the form of participation, student assignments, mid-term evaluation, and final examination, according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Higher Education. Summative assessments include not only students’ knowledge and abilities, but also how their values and attitudes change over the course of this program. Summative assessments also help teachers determine if extra time should be set aside for students to develop certain skills, with emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, communication, and project management.

Formative assessments are informal and can help teachers identify how learning and teaching strategies can be improved during the course. Alternative forms of assessment also help teachers capture more complex learning outcomes such as creative thinking, problem solving, and leadership. Formative assessments can be done through observation, focus group discussions, class discussions, group work, and student presentations. It is encouraged to have a third party, school administrator or community representative take part in the formative assessment. The formative assessment should be a collaborative activity, involving representatives from across the educational community to enrich the sense of appropriate standards and aims for learning.

The evaluation tools in this course are designed as follows according to the Ministry of Higher Education’s Guidelines for Curriculum Review and Development (MoHE, 2012):

- **Participation 10%:** Teachers are encouraged to evaluate students based on their participation in class discussions, pre- and post-test, group activities, and attendance.

- **Student assignments 10%:** Student handouts are provided as in class or take home assignments.
• **Mid-term 20%:** Students are assessed based on their group action plans for implementing their project.

• **Final exam 60%:** The learning objectives provided in the units should guide the final assessment. Students will be assessed in two parts: 30% for final essay and 30% for implementation of their final project. It is up to the teachers to assess the students based on their final project according to their preferred testing methods.
## Unit Summary

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<td></td>
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<td>• Team Signup Sheet</td>
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<td>• Pre-test</td>
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<td><strong>1. Environmental Ethics and Values</strong></td>
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<td><strong>4. Community Engagement</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5. Demonstration and Celebration</strong></td>
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<td>• Certificate Template (2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Reflective Essay Exam</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Assessment Rubric</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Post-test</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Course Introduction

TIME NEEDED: 60 minute class session

OUTLINE:

The National Service Learning Clearinghouse defines Community Service Learning (CSL) as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” CSL is interchangeably described as a philosophy, pedagogy, methodology, and an approach. As a philosophy, CSL encourages experiential learning by which teachers, students, and the community create their own educational spaces for learning. As a pedagogy, the teachers take on the role of facilitator and collaborator with the students in setting specific targets. The curriculum model for this course involves students 1) identifying their sense of place and environmental values, 2) identifying problems in the community, 3) developing an action plan to address an environmental issue, 4) engaging with the community, and 5) reflection and celebrating the impact the project has on students, teachers, and the community.

In this course students will be divided into teams of 15. Students in each group will have different leadership roles and team responsibilities based on their interest. Student team roles include project leader and assistant, media team, communication team, budget team, risk management team, and portfolio team. Through these different team responsibilities students will gain skills in problem solving, critical thinking, stakeholder engagement, citizenship action, and project management.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

• Students understand the purpose of community service learning and it’s 5-steps.
• Students explain the difference between community service learning and traditional classroom teaching methods.
• Students will be familiar with the course syllabus objectives, teaching approach, activities, and assessment.
• Students understand the team responsibilities and select the positions they are most interested in leading.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:
• What is community service learning and its 5 steps?
• What skills can you gain from community service learning?
• What are the assessment methods for this course?
• What are the different team responsibilities for this course?

TEACHING RESOURCES & MATERIALS NEEDED:
• Presentation: Introduction to environmental citizenship through applied community service learning
• Student Handout: Course syllabus
• Video: Student Action Program (produced by Bamyan University students)
• Team Responsibility Sign-up Sheet
• Portfolio Packet
• Pre-test (optional)

ACTIVITY GUIDANCE:

Step 1: Class introductions
Step 2: Provide Presentation: *Environmental Citizenship through Applied Community Service Learning*. Explain team responsibilities in detail during the presentation.

Step 3: Show Video: *Student Action Program*

Step 4: Provide Student Handout: *Course syllabus*. Review the syllabus with the class.

Step 5: Have students select two team responsibilities they are most interested in leading on the *Team Responsibility Sign Up Sheet*. Explain that students will be divided into groups of 15 and consideration will be made to try and make sure all students receive their first or second choice for team responsibilities.

Step 6: Provide students with the *Portfolio Packet* including the portfolio guidance sheet and meeting note templates. All students should contribute towards keeping records of their project documents, but it will be the responsibility of the portfolio team to ensure all materials, including class meeting notes, are recorded and organized into their team portfolio.

Step 7 (Optional): Provide students with the *Pre-test* and inform them they will not be graded but should answer the questions as thoroughly as possible to receive points for participation.

**KEY READINGS:**


Unit 1: Exploration of ethics and values

UNIT GOALS:

1. Students apply ethical thinking to the natural world and the relationship between humans and the environment by creating a learning atmosphere that is open to ideas.
2. Students internalize how sense of place and environmental values can be influenced by emotional connection, experiences, culture, and society.
3. Students learn the elements of delivering an effective oral presentation.

Activity 1: Sense of place & human identity

TIME NEEDED: 60-90 minute class session

OUTLINE:

We all have places in our lives that are special and important to us. Sense of place is how we identify with the natural environment and human-made features which makes each place on this earth unique. Our sense of place includes the history of a place, how places have evolved over time, and how a place is currently seen and experienced. Sense of place can be understood as a combination of two principals: place attachment and place meaning as shown in Figure Apx 2. Place attachment is the bond between people and places, or the degree to which a place is important to people. It can also be described as the ‘the extent to which an individual values or identifies with a particular environmental setting.’ Place meaning can be described by questions such as ‘What does this place mean to you?’ or ‘What kind of a place is this?’
During this activity students will discuss their own place attachment and meaning and compare this to how other students in their class identify to a place in their community. Studies such as Lovett and Chi (2015), show how placed-based education in CSL can be an important pedagogy for preparing students to meet community needs and learn about the importance of civic responsibility. They found that as students’ emotional attachment to the local community increased, they had more concrete expectations from other participants concerning the local community. Additionally, perceptions of place attachment influenced students’ ideals and attitudes towards local community engagement and provided an indicator of potential participation. As we all have different values and place meanings, it is important to understand one another and identify common goals when engaging community stakeholders in a project to address an environmental issue.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students identify their own place attachment and meaning to the world around them through group discussions.
- Students explore how their place attachment and meaning are influenced by experiences, education, culture, and society through describing key influences.
- Students discuss how other members of their society might define their sense of place differently and how this influences the impact they have on their environment.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:
• How would you define your own relationship and sense of place in your community or a place you commonly visit?

• How have the events that have happened in your life and the people you have met influenced your place meaning and attachment?

TEACHING RESOURCES & MATERIALS:

• Resource Sheet: Why care about your place?

• 8 sheets of poster paper or white boards

• Markers

• Tape

ACTIVITY GUIDANCE:

Before starting this activity display the eight place meanings in Resource Sheet: Why care about your place around the room. These should be written in large font size on white boards or on flip chart paper.

Step 1: Ask students to walk around the room and read each of the different place meanings. After they have finished reading all of them ask them to stand by the one that means the most to them. Point out that if they have a different place meaning that is not listed to choose ‘other’ (number 8).

Step 2: Give students 15 minutes to discuss in a group with the other classmates who choose the same place meaning why it is important to them. If there is only one student at a place meaning ask them to join another group to discuss and compare their place meaning values. Then have one representative from each group summarize to the class why their group members choose that place meaning.
Step 3: Describe to students the definition of ‘place meaning’ and ‘place attachment’ and how they are both components of ‘sense of place’.

Step 4: Finally have the students discuss the following questions: What events or experiences in your life have influenced your place meaning? How do you think members of your society such as a farmer, politician, or religious leader might define their sense of place differently? Explain to students that when designing their project in their community it is important for them to understand how different people from their society identify with their sense of place.

Step 5: At the end of class, announce to the students which teams they will be on and their leadership roles (team leader, team assistant, media team, communication team, risk management team, budget team, or portfolio team). Ask the students if they have any questions regarding their team responsibilities.

ASSESSMENT:

Use formative assessment during class and group discussions to evaluate how well students understand the concepts of sense of place, place attachment, and place meaning.

Note: Students’ sense of place will be an ongoing assessment throughout the course.

KEY READINGS:


**Activity 2: Social & environmental welfare**

**TIME NEEDED:** 90 minute class session

**OUTLINE:**

In the real world we are all faced with ethical dilemmas. An example of an ethical dilemma is choosing between spending time at work taking care of personal issues, such as scheduling a doctors appointment or enrolling your children in educational programs using your company phone and internet facilities. Since most of your time during the week is spent at work, it is difficult to find time to manage such personal or family issues outside of working hours. This presents an ethical dilemma between company workforce rules verses personal obligations. An example of an environmental ethical dilemma is building a hydroelectric dam. This will negatively impact the downstream ecosystem services and the fishing and agriculture communities, but at the same time will provide electricity to thousands of people.

During this activity students will debate environmental ethical dilemmas that are currently hot topics in their community through poster presentations. They will understand the linkages of how different peoples’ sense of place impact their ethical decisions. Students will also discuss the successful components of a poster and oral presentation for communicating to a targeted audience.

**Definitions:**

**Ethics:** an area of study that deals with ideas about what is good and bad behavior.

**Ethical dilemma:** a choice between two options, both of which will bring a negative result based on society and personal guidelines.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**
• Students debate different social and environmental ethical decisions that have taken place in their community through poster presentations.

• Students recognize elements that make a good oral presentation by receiving feedback from the teacher(s) and students on the effectiveness of their poster presentations.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

• What are challenging debates and tough ethical decisions that people in your community have faced in terms of human activities and environmental impact?

• How might someone’s sense of place influence their environmental ethical decisions?

• What components make a good poster presentation?

TEACHING RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:

• Resource Sheet: Ethical dilemma examples

• Presentation: Giving a good oral presentation

• Student Handout: Elements of an effective oral presentation

• Student Handout: Oral presentation rubric

• Flipchart paper

• Markers

• Tape or flipchart display board

ACTIVITY GUIDANCE:

Step 1: Ask students about the meaning of an ethical dilemma. Make sure students understand what the word ethical means "having to do with right and wrong" and that the word dilemma means a difficult decision. An ethical dilemma is a difficult decision someone has to make about whether something is right or wrong.
Step 2: Ask students what are current environmental ethical dilemmas being debated in the news or in their community? Write the responses on the board. See Resource Sheet: Ethical dilemma examples. Ask students how someone’s sense of place could influence their ethical decisions?

Step 3: Provide Presentation: Giving a good oral presentation. Give each student a copy of the Student Handout: Element of an effective presentation and Student Handout: Oral presentation rubric for reference material.

Step 4: Divide students into small groups to create a poster illustrating one of the issues described on the board that addresses both sides of the argument. Have them present to the class and practice their oral communication skills.

ASSESSMENT:
Provide feedback to the students on their poster presentation skills using the Student Handout: Oral Presentation Rubric, while allowing other students in the class to give feedback. Students should be assessed on understanding their audience, content, body language, effective visual aids, and timing.

KEY READINGS:


Activity 3: Cultural perspectives & values

TIME NEEDED: 60 minute class session

OUTLINE:

Ethical citizenship implies that students become critically conscious, active citizens aware of socio-cultural context within which they live and work (James & Iverson, 2009). Respect for cultural values and belief systems is a fundamental part of this course. In this activity, a guest speaker from the community should be invited to discuss cultural values and the importance of working together to address environmental issues. Multiculturalism advocates the idea that maintaining our different cultural identities can enrich us and our communities. Multiculturalism celebrates diversity by allowing us to value our individual heritages and beliefs while respecting those of others. By learning to recognize our similarities and appreciate our differences, together we can work towards protecting our environment and creating a more peaceful world. This includes respecting and valuing people regardless of the color of their skin, ethnicity, their physical abilities, beliefs, or the language they speak. In Unit 2, students’ will need to research and learn about their community’s different beliefs, values, and experiences. This activity should set the stage for students to understand multiculturalism.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students gain a better understanding of multiculturalism and diversity across societies, groups, and individuals through discussions with a guest speaker.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

- How have your beliefs changed through your experiences growing up?
- What are cultural diversities in your community?
• How have cultures in your community been misunderstood?

• What are similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and individuals address environmental issues?

TEACHING RESOURCES:

• Resource material provided by guest speaker and teacher(s)

ACTIVITY GUIDANCE:

Students should prepare at least one question for the guest speaker prior to the class. The teacher(s) should provide students with readings and background information about the guest speaker and/or materials provided by the guest speaker to formulate their questions one week before the seminar.

The format of the seminar can vary based on whether the guest speaker wants to give a presentation, video, or facilitate group activities.

The teacher(s) should moderate the guest seminar by introducing the guest speaker and having questions to help start the discussion. The teacher(s) should also make sure the discussion stays on topic and that students have opportunities to ask questions.

KEY READINGS:

Unit 2: Sustainability inquiry

UNIT GOALS:

1. Students identify the environmental, social, economic, and governance issues and needs in their community.
2. Students identify an environmental problem they want to solve and research the issue.

Activity 4: Factors affecting environmental change

TIME NEEDED: 90 minute class session

OUTLINE:

Afghanistan has experienced significant land use changes over the past 30 years due to climate change, food insecurity, urbanization, and conflict. Understanding the cultural, social, economic, environmental, and political drivers of land use change is important for knowing how to sustainably manage our environment in the future. In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by 193 countries in provide a framework for shared action “to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.” Also known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this universal policy agenda includes 17 goals and 169 targets which set out social, economic, and environmental objectives until 2030. About half of the SDGs are directly environmental in focus. Afghanistan is one of the 193 countries committed to achieving the SDGs. With the help of the United Nations the government of Afghanistan is leading the process to implement and monitor the SDGs through collaborative partnerships with all stakeholders. This includes universities and the roles that professors and students can play in research and science for making informed policy recommendations, citizen action, and decision making for achieving the SDGs.
In this activity students will explore the economic, social, environmental, and governance issues in their community. They will identify what are the driving forces of change and how all three dimensions of sustainability (social, economic, and environmental) relate to each other. Finally, students will review the SDGs and discuss how some of the sustainability issues they identified in their community also relate to the 17 universal SDGs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students discuss the environmental, social, economic, and governance changes that have occurred in their community over the past 20 years through analyzing photos.
- Students recognize the governance, economic, and social forces that effect their local environment through a class mapping exercise.
- Students identify a web of sustainability issues in their community and their relationship to one another and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through class discussion.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

- What changes have occurred in your community in the last 5, 10, 20 years? What do you think influenced these changes?
- What are environmental, social, economic, and governance issues in your community? How are these issues related?
- Are any of the sustainability issues you identified in your community related to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals?
- What do you think is your role as a university student in helping your country achieve the Sustainable Development Goals?

TEACHING RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:
• Photos or sketched drawings of places in the community taken by the students and teacher(s)
• Resource Sheet: Our community
• Presentation: Sustainable Development Goals
• Flip chart paper
• Post-it notes
• Markers

ACTIVITY GUIDANCE:
Present this activity to the students at least one week before using it. Ask students to be highly aware of sights, sounds, smells and interactions they encounter in their community and take photos or draw a quick sketch of what they notice. Have them bring the photos or sketched drawings to class. The teacher(s) should also bring a good mix of photos that depicts the landscapes, built structures, cultural history, livelihoods, and people.

Step 1: Display the photos in the classroom. Have students in pairs select two photos that interest them.

Step 2: Discussing in pairs, ask the students to describe what they think the picture would have looked like 5, 10, and 20 years ago. Have them discuss any environmental, social, or economic changes. Are these changes negative or positive? What influenced these changes (for example: globalization, technology, culture)?

Step 3: Next have them identify a social, environmental, economic, and/or governance (who makes the decisions) factor relating to their photo. Have them write the factors on Post-it notes or small pieces of paper. Students should be specific about their factors. Rather than just
writing a general word like ‘pollution’ they should say exactly how this affects the community.

Place the Post-it notes or tape the small pieces of paper to the bottom of the photo.

Step 4: Label a large sheet of flip chart paper with the heading ‘Our community’ with social, environmental, economic, and governance labeled on all four corners of the flip chart paper. Tape several flip chart papers together, if needed, to make a large enough sheet to include all the photos. See Resource Sheet: *Our community*

Step 5: Beginning with a social factor, ask one pair of students to describe their social factor. Tape it on the large sheet of paper next to corner labeled “social”. Ask the students for another factor that relates to that social factor. Place it in the relevant section and draw a line connecting the two.

Step 6: Continue the process until the students have no more related factors and no more lines can be drawn.

Step 7: Ask the students to look at this interconnected web of factors and discuss how the web is influenced by external factors – regional or global factors outside the community.

Step 8: Provide Presentation: *Sustainable Development Goals.* Ask the class to discuss how factors identified in their web might relate to the SDGs.

Step 9: Ask students to start thinking about an environmental issue they would like to investigate in their community. The community web of factors and issues are some examples but there may be other issues not mentioned that students are passionate about addressing. Before next class each group of students should come up with 4-5 concrete environmental issues they would like to research and solve.

**KEY READINGS:**


**Activity 5: Identifying problems & formulating research questions**

TIME NEEDED: 90 minute class session

OUTLINE:

Many environmental problems are complex, involving a whole range of causes. The Issue Analysis Technique allows students to organize information about an issue in a conceptual framework. For an environmental problem or issue, some part of the environment is at risk, but so may be jobs, homes, health, cultural resources, or other things of value. Issues arise when two players have different knowledge of a problem. However, it is just as likely that two players differ on an issue because of different beliefs and values.

In this activity students will be taught to analyze environmental problems related to their field of study in terms of the issue itself, the stakeholders, positions, beliefs, and values. Students will explore issues they are interested to investigate in small groups discussing the various positions. Students will then decide on an issue they want to investigate for their project and will evaluate alternative solutions to investigate.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- Students analyze stakeholder positions, beliefs, and values around an issue they are interested in solving through using the Issue Analysis Technique.
• Students demonstrate group decision making skills by deciding an environmental issue to investigate.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

• What is the problem and issue you are interested in solving?
• Who are the stakeholders? What are the stakeholders’ positions? What do the stakeholders believe about the issue?
• What are solutions to this issue?
• What are research questions to further investigate this issue?

TEACHING RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:

• Student Handout: Issue Analysis Technique

ACTIVITY GUIDANCE:

Step 1: Ask students collectively in their groups to select 2-4 issues they are interested in investigating and solving.

Step 2: Provide each group of students with the Student Handout: Issue Analysis Technique. Introduce students to the Issue Analysis Technique and ask them to fill out the handout for each of the issues they have identified.

Optional: To practice the Issue Analysis Technique the teacher(s) can provide students with a short article or video of an ongoing environmental issue. The students can then discuss the problem, issue, stakeholders, position, beliefs, and solutions as a class.

Step 3: Ask each group to briefly present their issue analysis examples to the class. Have the other students provide feedback and discuss any other players or positions not identified.

Step 4: Ask student groups to collectively decide on the issue that is most interesting and feasible.
Step 5: As a homework assignment, ask students to conduct a library or internet search on the issues they are interested in solving. By the next class each group should collectively decide on the issue they would like to research for their project.

KEY READINGS:


Activity 6: Scientific & social inquiry

TIME NEEDED: 3 weeks

OUTLINE:

At this stage students should have already started to think about their problem, issue, the players and their position, and started to develop a list of relevant resource materials on their topic. In this activity students will research and analyze their issue over the next three weeks. The research process presented will help students better understand the position, beliefs, and values of people involved in the issue as well as the scientific information
underpinning the problem. Students will observe, collect data, interpret the data, and summarize how their findings will help them make sound decisions regarding the solution to their issue. It will be up to the students to select the most appropriate methods for their data collection. For example, they may gather data through desktop study, observations, interviews, focus group discussion, questionnaires, or a combination of these approaches. The teacher(s) and project leader should ensure that all group members take an active role in the research process.

Teacher(s) should consider the following for guiding this activity:

**Time Considerations:** Teacher(s) should make sure students are clear that they only have 3 weeks to complete the whole research process, including developing their research questions, collecting data, and analyzing the results. Students should prioritize and select their sampling and research methods accordingly. For example, if students want to conduct 20 semi-structured interviews, they should consider that this will take a long time to analyze the data and they will need to set up necessary time outside of class. Thus, it may be better to interview 10 key informants in the community, such as community leaders, government directors, and non-governmental agencies with knowledge on their topic based on time limitations.

**Assigning Team Responsibilities:** Teacher(s) and project leaders should ensure that all group members are involved in the research process. For example, students may assign a small research team to interview local residents regarding their attitudes towards the environmental issue, while another team interviews international organizations who have scientific information about this issue. Another team can collect and analyze primary documents.

**Research Ethics:** Teacher(s) should inform and guide students on how to ethically contact and conduct interviews with key informants and community members.
Risk and Safety: Teacher(s) and the risk management team should discuss any safety concerns regarding data collection. If anything is determined as a risk, it should be avoided and an alternative method, sampling technique, or process should be selected.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students develop research questions to guide their environmental investigation through group and class discussions.
- Students work as a team and designate different leadership responsibilities during their research design, collection, and analysis.
- Students develop a structured and feasible research plan using qualitative and/or quantitative research methods.
- Students collect data using either observation, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, secondary data collection, or a combination of these methods.
- Students interpret data and draw conclusions on solutions to their issue.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

- What is the research cycle?
- Why is it important to receive informed consent when interviewing?
- How do I protect the privacy of my research participants?
- Are there any risks or safety concerns associated with conducting this research? How can we minimize the risks?

TEACHING RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:

- Student Handout: Environmental investigation process
- Student Handout: Interview protocols
- Student Handout: Developing research questions
• Presentation: *Introduction to qualitative research methods*

**ACTIVITY GUIDANCE:**

Step 1: Introduce the environmental investigation process using the Presentation: *Introduction to qualitative research methods* and Student Handout: *Environmental investigation process.*

Step 2: Ask students to develop their research questions to investigate the environmental issue they selected. Provide Student Handout: *Developing research questions.* Students should have one main question and no more than 2-5 specific questions. To guide the students in developing their specific questions ask the students: What do you need to know about the different players? What scientific information do you need to know?

Step 3: Provide students who will be using interviews or focus group discussions with the Student Handout: *Interview protocols*

Step 4: Over the next three weeks students should complete a) their research design, b) prepare the research instruments, c) sample and collect the data, d) analyze the results, and e) summarize their findings. As there are many steps to this process, students will have to schedule time outside of class to carry out all these research activities.

Step 5: Students should document their research findings in the form of a presentation or written report (bullet points are recommended due to the short time limitation).

**ASSESSMENT:**

Assess students by having them present and discuss their research questions, methods, analysis, and findings. Assess if their research plan and findings meet the activity objectives.

**KEY READINGS:**


Unit 3: Project planning

UNIT GOALS:

1. Students will understand how to develop an action plan based on their research findings, budget, time, and resources.
2. Students will learn how to use media, manage their budget, and assess risks for implementing their environmental action project.

Activity 7: Action plan

TIME NEEDED: 3 weeks

OUTLINE:

Over the next three weeks students will develop an action plan to improve the environmental issue they want to address. This activity should be completely student driven. Students’ creative thinking, decision making, and leadership qualities will support the success of their action plan. The action plan must include a statement of their proposed project based on their research, specific activities, timeline for implementation, a budget, risk management plan, and evaluation plan.

A project committee should be established comprising of relevant stakeholders. The role of the project committee will be to approve the students’ action plans and provide feedback to the students. It is suggested that the project committee consists of the Vice Chancellor of the University, Dean of the Faculty, Head of the Department, government representative, local community representative, and any other experts with related background on the students’ topics.
Activities 8 and 9 should be taught during these three weeks to help guide students on the use of media, developing a budget, and finalizing the risk management portion of their action plan. It is recommended to invite professionals in media, budgeting, and project management as guest facilitators to provide hands-on guidance to students for activities 8 and 9.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students develop an action plan indicating the steps they will take to improve an environmental issue in their community through student-led group activities.
- Students present their action plan to the project committee for feedback.
- Students address all the important questions for proceeding with citizen action provided in the student handout.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Is the action chosen the most effective one available?
- What are the social, economic, and environmental consequences of this action?
- Do my personal values support this action?
- Do I understand the beliefs and values of others involved in this action?

TEACHING RESOURCES:

- Student Handout: Action plan activity sheet
- Student Handout: Questions for proceeding with citizen action
- Action Plan Approval Form
- Action Plan Grading Rubric

UNIT GUIDANCE:
Step 1: Introduce to students the Student Handout: Action plan activity sheet. Go over in detail each component of the action plan activity sheet. Students will need to organize themselves during class sessions to complete their action plan within 3 weeks using this template for recording team notes and ideas.

Step 2: Professionals from the community with backgrounds in media, project planning, and budgeting should be invited early on to guide the students as necessary in developing their action plan (see activity 8 & 9).

Step 3: The teacher(s) should provide time during class sessions for students to present updates on the progress of their action plan and receive feedback from teacher(s), guest facilitators, and other students. Provide students with the Student Handout: Questions for proceeding with citizen action to help facilitate class discussion.

Step 4: Once the students determine their solution and steps of action, they should work in their respective teams i.e. media team, communication team, budget team, risk management team to determine their team roles and tasks for each activity identified. The team leader and portfolio team should gather and record information for typing up their final action plan.

Step 5: Students should submit their final action plan to the project committee for review and feedback. The project committee should review the action plans in a timely fashion (2-3 days) to return it back to the students for them to have time to make revisions. See Action Proposal Approval Form.

ASSESSMENT:
The project committee should assess the students’ action plans using the Action Plan Approval Form.
Student midterm evaluations (20% of their final grade) will include a group assessment based on their final action plan. Use the Action Plan Grading Rubric.

KEY READINGS:

Activity 8: Media & communication

TIME NEEDED: 90 minute class session

OUTLINE:

Today we live in the age of media. Media is very important as a means of receiving, producing, sharing, and broadcasting information. Media influences the knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviors of individuals and society. Encouraging students to consider using media as part of their action plan requires a high degree of active learning and student engagement. Creating media with targeted messages will help students build their communication, collaboration, and creativity skills.

A large budget is not required to create original media that is informative, inspiring, and educational. For example, the dramatic growth of social media and media networks in Afghanistan creates new opportunities for students to in-expensively use technology for communication outreach. However, it is important to consider any risks involved with using media, since a simple social media post can take on a different life of its own. A proper media strategy should be incorporated in the students’ action plans.
The purpose of this activity is to invite a professional media expert to acquaint students with the basic concepts and methods that frame communications and media. Students learn how to use media to promote and effectively communicate information to the local community and the world at large.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students develop skills in media practice through practical exercises with a media expert.
- Students learn about the different types of media they can use to raise awareness about their project such as through social media, film, print, story boards, news, and radio from the media expert.
- Students advise each other on how to use media as part of their action plan through class discussion.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

- How can you reach your targeted audience through media?
- What types of media tools can you use to promote and build awareness about your project?
- When and how should you use media?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the media team?

TEACHING RESOURCES:

- Student Handout: *Steps of a media campaign*
- Student Handout: *Photography guidelines*

UNIT GUIDANCE:
Step 1: The teacher(s) should invite and coordinate with a media expert prior to this activity and brief them on the students’ projects. The teacher(s) and media expert should come up with the teaching strategy for this activity. The activity should be practical and support the students in developing their action plan.

Step 2: Copies of the Student Handout: *Steps of a media campaign* and Student Handout: *Photography guidelines* should be provided and explained to the students.

Step 3: The media expert should discuss separately with the student media teams regarding their need for extra support for developing and implementing their media related activities for their project.

KEY READINGS:


*Activity 9: Project budgeting and risk management*

TIME NEEDED: Two (2) 60 minute class sessions

OUTLINE:
The aim of activity 9 is to engage students in budget and risk management planning. Students will have a thorough grasp of how to develop a budget and risk management plan for their project. Professionals with expertise in financial management and risk management for project planning should be invited to help guide the students.

**Budgeting:** Students learn project budgeting, justification, and coping with change as essential elements in the process of developing and planning their action project. The budget team should take the lead on managing their teams’ budget for the remainder of the program. However, all students should have a basic understanding of financial reporting to provide input on decision making, enhancing financial monitoring, and identifying the best value for the cost. Accurate cost estimating is a critical skill. Students will have the option to seek additional funding or in-kind contributions for their project and must be able to adjust their budget accordingly.

**Risk Management:** The risk management process is an essential tool in the development of the students’ projects. An effective risk analysis leads to increased awareness of the challenges and processes of reducing risks. Identifying potential risks, selecting strategies to minimize the risk, and monitoring risk are important elements to a risk management plan. Through the risk management process students will be able to: (1) identify exposures to risks, (2) assess alternatives, and (3) decide risk reduction actions.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- Students create a project budget through consultations with a finance expert.
- Students identify project risks, their impact on the project, and risk reduction actions through creating a risk reduction log frame.

**KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:**
• What should be included on a budget sheet?
• How do we track and record expenses?
• Are there risks involved in the action?
• What are alternative actions that can be used to minimize the risk?

TEACHING RESOURCES:
• Student Handout: Project risk management log frame
• Student Handout: Budget template example

UNIT GUIDANCE:
Step 1: The teacher(s) should invite and coordinate with a finance and risk management expert prior to this activity and brief them on the students’ projects. The teaching methodology should be determined before class and arrangements should be made for students to access a computer lab if required.

Step 2: Students should be provided the Student Handout: Project risk management log frame and Student Handout: Budget template example. Students can work on these handouts during class.

Step 3: The invited experts should discuss separately with the student budget and risk management teams regarding their need for extra support and training for finalizing their budget and risk management plan for their project.

KEY READINGS:


Unit 4: Community engagement

UNIT GOALS:

1. Students prepare each step of their action plan.
2. Students collectively implement their action project by engaging the local community.

Activity 10: Project preparation

TIME NEEDED: Two weeks

OUTLINE:

Development of key skills inherent to the project preparation stage includes communication, decision making, and leadership. Transformation at this stage of the project happens when students realize that they are the decision makers and leaders and have control over their project. Through this educational process students form their own ideals to make their action more meaningful (Reichenbach, 2011). They start to identify their own stakeholder engagement, leadership, and decision making styles as they take control of the learning process. In other words, leadership styles have an identity-creating function that influences both individual and pedagogical transformation.

Two weeks prior to the project implementation, students should go over their specific jobs and responsibilities in preparation for their project delivery. All materials should be purchased, logistics should be arranged, and community participants should be invited. It will be up to the students to proceed with their action plan, while asking for assistance as needed from teacher(s) and community members.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
- Students clearly describe their tasks and responsibilities for implementing their action plan through student driven planning.
- Students prepare all project materials, logistical arrangements, and additional steps as indicated in their action plan.
- Students are confident to deliver their individual and group assigned tasks.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Are project activities prepared?
- Are administrative activities prepared, including budgeting tasks?
- Are all transportation arrangements made?
- Is a draft press release prepared?
- Are risk management and security measures in place?
- Do all the students know their tasks and responsibilities?

TEACHING RESOURCES:

- Student Handout: *Project preparation checklist*

UNIT GUIDANCE:

Step 1: Provide each group of students with the Student Handout: *Project preparation checklist* as an example preparation checklist. It is recommended for students to create a project checklist to ensure that all tasks are being organized and carried out by the responsible team or person. The checklist will allow the team leader to follow up with each responsible person.

Step 2: Provide assistance and recommendation to the students as needed while they prepare for their project implementation.

*Note: Guidelines and templates on event management, developing an event agenda, press release, and presentation are provided in the “Key Reading” section.*
KEY READINGS:


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*Activity 11: Project implementation: Collective leadership*

TIME NEEDED: Based on action plan

OUTLINE:

The implementation stage of the CSL project, requires the teacher to continuously connect the project to academic learning (Jenkins and Sheehy, 2011). This is one of the final stages in the program where students perform and demonstrate the degree to which they have honed these skills. As students’ experience encounters through implementing their project with the community it is important to reflect on the social learning taking place and how it relates to theory.

Studies show that when students exit their comfort zones, through experiencing cognitive, physical, and emotional challenges high level learning abilities of problem solving,
leadership, and critical citizenship develop (Hatziconstantis and Kolympari, 2016). The implementation phase of the project can be exciting, stressful, and motivating. For some students, leadership and project management skills may come naturally, for others it may be more challenging. Teacher(s) should advise and address any concerns the students have throughout the implementation phase. Often times, things don’t always go 100% as planned and students will need to adapt their plans based on these circumstances.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students effectively implement their project according to their action plan.
- Students develop social learning skills through engaging the local community.
- Students experience challenges and successes that allow them to bridge theory with practice.
- Additional objectives are set by the students themselves.

UNIT GUIDANCE:

This activity is entirely student-driven. The teacher(s) should sit back and let the students lead their project implementation. It is what the students have been preparing for, a time to test their critical thinking, problem solving, stakeholder engagement, leadership, decision making, and project management skills in action!

ASSESSMENT

It is up to the teacher(s) to assess the students based on implementation of their final project (30% of their final grade) according to their preferred testing methods. By the implementation stage students have already been building their critical thinking, stakeholder engagement, problem solving, action (critical citizenship) skills, etc. It is encouraged that students are
assessed based on their sense of civic responsibility in terms of “behavior change” and their connection with their community.
Unit 5: Demonstration & celebration

UNIT GOALS:

1. Students, teachers, and community members celebrate and reflect on the impacts of the program.
2. Students discuss the skills, knowledge, and behaviors they learned and how they will apply their skills in the future.

Activity 12: Awards ceremony & reflective evaluation

TIME NEEDED: 2-3 hours

OUTLINE:

The last stage of CSL promotes sharing of lessons learned and celebration. Traditional education settings rarely practice celebration, but CSL shows it to play an important role in students’ and community learning objectives. Levkoe et al. (2014 p. 73) believes that for “civic engagement to succeed, individuals need to move from a focus on self to a focus on community and others.” Celebrations encourage students to focus less on personal gain and instead share experiences and lessons learned as being part of a bigger connected system. Sharing of experiences, skills, and attitudes gained from this program together with the community will allow students, teachers, and school administrators to see the bigger picture.

For this activity, the teacher(s) should take the responsibility to organize the awards ceremony for the students and invite community representatives, the project committee, parents, and other stakeholders involved in the project. The awards ceremony should be organized to highlight the students’ individual and team achievements, acknowledge the participation from the community, and discuss the challenges, successes, and impacts of the
program. Furthermore, the award ceremony will be an opportunity for the students to conduct a self-assessment as well as receive feedback from the community about their performance and outcomes of the project.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students, teachers, and the community members discuss what they learned about citizenship action and how their views and behaviors have changed.
- Students, teachers, and community members evaluate the program’s challenges, successes, and impacts.
- Students recognize their individual and team achievements and the skills, knowledge, and behavior learned.
- Students present a personal statement in which they make commitments about the actions they will take in their lives based on what they learned in this program.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

- What was the objective of the CSL program? What was achieved?
- What skills and knowledge did you learn?
- How did your personal views and behavior change throughout this course?
- How would you do things differently next time?

TEACHING RESOURCES:

- Resource Sheet: Questions to guide reflection
- Student Certificate Template
- Appreciation Certificate Template (for teachers and community members)
- Slideshow with photos (developed by teachers or students)
- Copies of team portfolios for each student
UNIT GUIDANCE:

The teacher(s) should organize the awards ceremony. Keep in mind the awards ceremony should include other activities besides speeches. It should be fun and remind all participants of the significance of the occasion.

Step 1: Determine the budget for the awards ceremony

Step 2: Set the ceremony date, time, and venue.

Step 3: Invite the participants.

Step 4: Invite a keynote speaker for the opening such as the University Chancellor or community representative

Step 5: Arrange a facilitator for the ceremony

Step 6: Prepare the certificates for the students, teachers, and other participants. See Certificate Templates

Step 7: Prepare all other materials such as photographs of the students work, slideshow with pictures showcasing the program, music, games or activities.

Step 8: Make a copy of team portfolios for all students

Step 9: Before the event inform students they will be asked to present a 2-minute personal statement during the awards ceremony. The topic for the personal statement is: What commitments will you now make in your lives based on what you learned in this program? They should refer back to what they learned in Unit 1 on how to give an effective oral presentation.
Step 10: During the awards ceremony use the Resource Sheet: *Questions to guide reflection* to help facilitate the course evaluation with students and community members.

Step 11: Present the awards

Step 11: After the awards ceremony provide students with the *Post-test (optional)* and *Reflective Essay Exam (30% of final grade)* either as a take home assignment or during exam week.

**ASSESSMENT**

Use the *Assessment Rubric: Reflective Essay Exam* to evaluate students’ final essay based on their critical thinking, actioning (change), stakeholder engagement, problem solving, and systems thinking skills learned. Studies such as Eyler & Giles (1999) demonstrate how deeper understanding of subject matter and recognition of the complexity of social issues occurs through CSL. Teacher(s) may also evaluate students based on how the program changed or influence their behavior, attitudes, and ability to integrate knowledge from various courses and apply them to the world of work, in turn enhancing their understanding of their discipline.  

*(Optional)* Evaluate students’ pre- and post-tests to help measure sustainability skills gained throughout the course. Pre- and post-test evaluations can help teachers understand which concepts or competencies were well taught and which ones need additional time or revision.
References


